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Wednesday, 26 September 2012, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić .... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Salam (Lebanon), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, President of the Republic of Yemen

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Republic of Yemen.

Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, President of the Republic of Yemen, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, President of the Republic of Yemen, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mansour (*spoke in Arabic*): To begin with, I offer my deep congratulations to Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly to steer its work at its sixty-seventh session. We trust in his capacity to ably manage the affairs of the Assembly during this session. I would like also to thank Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the General Assembly at its previous session, for all of his efforts. We also commend Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his wise management of the affairs of the United Nations and his interest in the developments in my country.

During the past few weeks the Islamic world has experienced a wave of outrage and anger as the result of a film containing explicit denigrations directed at the Muslim Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and the values of true Islam. It is deplorable that a campaign exists with the aim of deliberately insulting Islam and Muslims in order to distort their image worldwide and to sow seeds of hatred between nations and religions. Yet given all of that, such behaviour has attracted people who defend the film based on the justification of freedom of expression. Those people, however, must not overlook the fact that there should be limits on the freedom of expression, especially if such freedom is used to blaspheme the beliefs of nations and defame their religious figures and symbols.

While my country has strongly denounced the film, it has also called for respect for religions and religious figures, enhanced understanding and dialogue between religions and civilizations, and the adoption of international instruments to prevent any further similar practice or abuse of the right to freedom of expression. My country also calls for adherence to peaceful expressions of opinion, while denouncing violence and incitement to hatred that contradict the values of true Islam.

The current session of the Assembly is being held within the context of important global developments and events that are directly affecting political, economic, social, security and environmental situations in all nations of the world. Those circumstances have resulted in various pressures on all international actors and have destructively impacted the least developed

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countries — the so-called the countries of the South — including my country, the Republic of Yemen.

These days we are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the 26 September 1962 Revolution and the forty-ninth anniversary of the 14 October 1963 Revolution. I therefore take the opportunity to extend, from this international rostrum, my warmest greetings and best wishes to the great people of Yemen on this occasion. No doubt, the 50 years since the Yemeni revolution have contributed to sparking the Yemeni people's aspirations for change and for freedom, equality and national dignity that resulted in a new reality where the wheel of change continues to turn, despite all difficulties obstacles and barriers.

Recently, we experienced the historic achievement of a peaceful transfer of power for the first time in the country. That transition would not have been possible without the Yemeni people's determination to fulfil the goals of the revolution: freedom, sovereignty, an end to autocratic and family rule forever, and the establishment of a republican regime governed by the Constitution under a new social contract between the State and its people.

All Members know that Yemen is one of the so-called Arab Spring countries. We Yemenis experienced a difficult situation for over a year that could have led to catastrophe. However, the country avoided that trajectory because the disputing parties were wise enough to follow a role model designed to reach an agreement. Thus, they accepted the political settlement under the initiative of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) and its implementation mechanism, which had become the accepted reference for all parties and enjoyed international support.

Early presidential elections were conducted representing a public referendum for change. The referendum granted the new authorities full legitimacy to pursue the implementation of the provisions of the GCC initiative with a view to steering the country towards the safe side and a brighter future where people have faith in their future and can freely and with conviction choose their rulers and thus contribute to building the new Yemen.

In that respect, please allow me to express my gratitude and appreciation to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud of Saudi Arabia, the leaders of the GCC countries and the Secretary General of the GCC, Mr. Abdellatif Zayani, for all of the various forms of attention and support they have extended towards the political settlement of the crisis.

Thanks also go to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; the five permanent members of the Security Council; Mr. Jamal Benomar, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Yemen; the League of Arab States and its Secretary General; and the European Union for all of their efforts to bolster the political settlement and provide the necessary economic support to Yemen in all areas, including for convening the national dialogue conference.

The conference will outline the future of Yemen by addressing various situations such as conflict, war and pending problems, including the monopoly of power and wealth. The aim is to build a modern civil State based on the principles of the rule of law, equality, inclusion, equal opportunity, the fair distribution of wealth, participation in decision-making and managing elements linked to the new State's sovereignty at the national level under a political regime to be decided by the people of Yemen in the awaited national dialogue conference. I stress that the doors of the national dialogue conference are open to all Yemeni parties and all issues and demands. The conference shall be the means for correcting mistakes, achieving national reconciliation and developing the principles of a modern civil Yemeni State, under a unified Yemen, as stipulated by Security Council resolutions.

The current political arrangements in Yemen for the implementation of the settlement agreement and resolutions 2014 (2011) and 2051 (2012) have the support of the brothers and friends of Yemen. However, Yemen still faces many political, economic, security and social obstacles and impediments. Those obstacles represent weaknesses and jeopardize the progress and prosperity of Yemen in the coming decades. It is a fact that 95 per cent of the Yemeni people have the willingness and ambitions to move with the rest of the world into the twenty-first century. The political and social problems and the escalating political conflicts, anarchy and acts of violence and extremism shall never stand as obstacles in the way of the Yemeni people. Therefore, the right way to address the situation in Yemen is to adopt an overarching vision that takes into account all circumstances and conditions related to the country's history and geography and the challenges of the present and the future. A key factor is the strategic location of Yemen at the juncture of trade routes and in the heart of international sea navigation routes. Yemen faces the security challenges of organized crime, piracy and terrorist acts, in addition to the influx of illegal migrants and refugees to its coasts.

There is an increasing trend of unemployment among young people under 30, who represent 70 per cent of the total population of the country. The youth look forward to a better future and a modern civil State. That requires the international community and donor countries to understand those factors and to provide urgently needed support to our country in various fields, including in the areas of establishing a modern civil State based on democracy, good governance, respect for human rights and social justice. There is a need to abandon the traditional standard and bureaucratic mechanisms adopted by donor countries and international parties supporting the path towards settlement in Yemen.

As for us, we stand ready to provide a favourable and appropriate atmosphere for their work, absent of any complex Government bureaucracy, by adopting a high level of transparency and removing any obstacles they may face. I confirm that it is investment that results in stability, and not vice versa.

Terrorists, who have pervaded our country for more than 10 years and were recently poised to seize control of different Yemeni regions and provinces, represent a huge threat to local, regional and international peace and stability. Although, following the heroic acts of the Yemeni armed forces and local popular committees and a series of defeats, Al-Qaida is today much weaker than before, we cannot underestimate its desperation. Due to its failure to adapt after its successive defeats, Al-Qaida has equipped its members with explosive belts and transformed them into time bombs against innocent and unarmed people. That has resulted in Al-Qaida losing any local or national sympathy.

We reaffirm our commitment to eradicating terrorist elements and demand that its sources of internal and external support be eliminated. We invite our international partners in the fight against terrorism to provide more logistical and technical support to our security forces and counterterrorism units, and that they expand intelligence cooperation and coordination in that field.

I cannot pass up the opportunity to draw attention to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen as a result of the terrorism and acts of violence in Sadah and the events of the past year that have resulted in the displacement of more than 500,000 people from their villages, in addition to the increasing number of refugees from the Horn of Africa region. That led the United Nations and its agencies to launch an appeal for approximately $600 million. However, the funding gap stands at 50 per cent of the required amount. I therefore call on brotherly and friendly countries to respond to the appeal of the United Nations to enable it to meet the basic needs of internally displaced persons and refugees in our country.

It has been more than six decades since the General Assembly, which I have the honour to address today, issued the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is deplorable that, after all these years, many nations still suffer violations of their rights and dignity. The Palestinian people have been subjected to a gruesome escalation of Israeli violence. Israeli settlements are expanding, innocent Palestinians are maimed, activists are besieged, prisoners and detainees are oppressed and the attempts of the Israeli side to demolish the Al-Aqsa Mosque are continuing. That requires a stronger role and a more united and effective presence of the United Nations and its various agencies against Israeli arrogance and flouting of the resolutions of the international community and its rejection of all peaceful proposals and initiatives.

The lack of international pressure on Israel represents a key failure in international justice standards. The role of the United Nations and international forces in achieving justice and freedom requires the exertion of pressure to implement international resolutions. In that regard, I ask: has Israel forgotten that its State was created on the basis of an international resolution? We declare our full support for the application of the State of Palestine to become a full State Member of the United Nations in order to affirm its legitimacy and to ensure respect for its recognized rights under international law.

We also call on the United Nations to adopt appropriate solutions to end the crisis and internal war in Syria and to put an end to all forms of violence against thousands of civilians in Syria, including women and children. Proposed initiatives and announced peaceful solutions shall be revived to end the crisis and to make a success of the mission of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi.

I reiterate the call on all concerned parties in Syria, the Government and the insurgents, to heed and respond to repeated calls to initiate dialogue and make mutual concessions as the only way to stop the bloodshed. The only option for our brothers in Syria is to agree on an initiative to mark the path towards change and a peaceful transfer of power through the ballot box.

There is no doubt that Somalia has been living in dire crisis since the early 1990s. Yemen and Somalia have deep historical relations and both provide strategic depth for each other. On that basis, Yemen played a leading role in restoring peace and stability in Somalia by supporting the reconciliation efforts and hosting various rounds of negotiations between different parties. Yemen did not stop there; it opened its doors to more than a million Somali refugees, despite the difficult circumstances Yemen is encountering and all the economic, health and security impacts of the refugee process.

While we congratulate the Somali people on their success on their accomplishing a peaceful transfer of power and electing Mr. Hassan Sheik Mohamud as their new President in a democratic environment, we hope that those elections will lead to reconstruction of State institutions; the restoration of peace and security to Somalia; and an end to the humanitarian suffering and its consequences, including the suffering of a million Somali refugees in our country. We reaffirm the Republic of Yemen's position of support for the elected Somali president and the Government he is forming. We will spare no effort to enhance relations between our two brotherly countries for our mutual benefit and in the interests of security and stability and of countering terrorism and piracy in the region.

In that context, the continuing and intensive influx of migrants and asylum seekers into Yemen represents a real threat to national security, peace and stability in the region. It is essential that the international community share that burden with Yemen, especially since Yemen's resources are being drained. Under the exceptional conditions that Yemen is dealing with, it is extremely difficult for us to cope with the continued flow of arrivals.

The brutal ethnic cleansing of Muslims in Myanmar makes it incumbent on the international community to pay attention to that humanitarian tragedy and take concrete steps to stop the series of violent and savage acts being committed against that group. Considering the acts of ethnic brutality and other practices that have occurred in recent months, it is not enough to issue statements condemning and denouncing them. An international committee should be set up to investigate human rights violations against Muslims in that country, deliver humanitarian aid to them and provide guarantees to protect them against further violence and atrocities.

Finally, I would like to reiterate my thanks to the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General. We greatly appreciate the role of the United Nations as an international platform that brings together all countries and nations of the globe for the sake of peace, security, freedom, human rights and coexistence between nations, religions and civilizations and their common interests.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Yemen for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, President of the Republic of Yemen, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Liberia.

Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Johnson-Sirleaf: I congratulate Mr. Vuk Jeremić and the people of Serbia on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I would like to assure him of Liberia's full cooperation and support as he carries out the responsibilities entrusted to him in steering the affairs of this session. I would also like to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of the State of Qatar, for his capable stewardship of the affairs of the sixty-sixth session and the many bold initiatives undertaken in the interests of world peace during his tenure.

My highest commendation goes to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who continues to demonstrate sound leadership in the face of new and complicated challenges. He has begun his second term with renewed vigour and a clear articulation of the priorities that represent the major concerns of the international community.

The selection of the theme for this session, which calls for the settlement of disputes by peaceful means, could not have been more appropriate. When we review the state of the world, we see an international landscape checkered with armed conflict, economic crises and environmental degradation. For those who have been through the painful experience of conflict, including my own country, Liberia, this year's theme becomes very pertinent. The cost of conflict in lives and infrastructural destruction makes us doubly appreciative of the value of preventive action in averting conflict. The need for conflict prevention takes on added urgency, because most conflicts are internal, engendered by marginalization, inequity and injustice. It becomes imperative, therefore, to identify and remove those triggers of conflict before they cause explosions.

Our Government's efforts to achieve the twin objectives of conflict prevention and peace consolidation are being reinforced through our engagement with the peacekeeping and peacebuilding architecture of the United Nations. In an environment of peace, we have prioritized actions aimed at re-establishing the rule of law by building the capacity of our institutions and processes to deliver justice and security. We have formulated a road map for national reconciliation to ensure that peace is sustainable.

Our development partners, including the United Nations and its specialized agencies, have remained faithful to our national agenda. They have supported our priority programmes for women's empowerment, increased agricultural productivity and food security, roads and infrastructure, and job creation. All the United Nations agencies must be supplied with the capacity to provide support to Government programmes in those areas. That is particularly critical for the new gender entity, UN-Women, which is the youngest among them and whose viability must be assured. We have made strong strides in gender equality, but much more must be done for girls' education and women's empowerment. Tremendous progress has also been made in health-care delivery.

We are particularly pleased by the recent UNICEF report, which shows a sharp reduction in the level of child mortality. However, there are still many challenges to overcome before we can ensure universal access to health care.

Many developing countries, such as Liberia, have structured their economies around the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). While some countries have made considerable progress in reaching some of the Goals, many others will be unable to achieve them by 2015. There is an emerging consensus that efforts must be accelerated in order to achieve maximum progress in reaching the MDGs over the next three years.

I am honoured and humbled to have been selected by the Secretary-General as one of the co-Chairs of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. We are mindful of the difficulty of our task, which requires us to propose a framework that builds on but goes beyond the MDGs in the establishment of goals that are ambitious but achievable. We know that the results of our work must reflect the broad political consensus of the public and private sectors and civil society. We know that the defined goals should enable all people in all countries to be freed from the shackles of poverty through sustainable development.

Liberia remains fully committed to the ideals and purposes of the United Nations. We believe that the Organization should continue to occupy the centre of global governance by leading efforts to meet our collective challenges to peace, security and development. To meet that objective, the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform need to come to an early and logical conclusion. My Government is encouraged that an increasing number of Member States support the enlargement of the Council in both the permanent and the non-permanent categories. That would ensure a fairer and more equitable participation, reflective of the world demography. In that regard, Liberia supports the African common position, based on the Ezulwini Consensus adopted by the African Union.

In the same vein, we must ensure that the General Assembly is revitalized in order for it to fully assume all the responsibilities entrusted to it under the Charter.

It remains, after all, the most representative body of the United Nations.

The high-level United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty, which ended recently here in New York, sought to develop the highest possible international standards for the trade in conventional weapons. However, strong national positions on that sensitive global issue prevented an agreement on a binding arms trade treaty. Yet, nations of goodwill and countries like Liberia that have experienced devastation from the illicit trade in and diversion of conventional weapons must continue our strong advocacy, taking into account the full range of differences and disagreements. We would therefore encourage bilateral consensus-building ahead of a new round of negotiations. At the same time, we are convinced that the final draft text of the arms trade treaty, though imperfect and incomplete, contains essential elements, upon which future negotiations can succeed.

We express our deep condolences on the death of the United States Ambassador and staff and the Libyan nationals in the attack on the United States consulate in Benghazi. All nations should be concerned about the spreading of violence in reaction to a film that demonstrates unacceptable insensitivity to the Islamic faith. Even in such circumstances, we must all be mindful that democracy requires freedom — freedom of ideas, freedom of association, freedom of religion and, more important, freedom of expression. That often results in statements and actions that may offend. Tolerance, not violence, is the appropriate response to prevent further violence. Liberia is a clear example, where, were it not for our own tolerance of our new-found freedom of expression, our country would be back in chaos.

While the majority of the countries in our subregion are consolidating economic and social gains, underpinned by democratic processes, some are, regrettably, still dogged by serious challenges that risk undermining the peace and progress of the entire region. We in Liberia, like many other countries in the region and the world at large, were particularly appalled by the unconstitutional unravelling of the democratic Governments in Mali and Guinea-Bissau in the early part of this year. We unequivocally condemn such attempts to seize power through unconstitutional means.

Accordingly, Liberia endorses the decisions of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which sought the full restoration of constitutional order in both countries in the shortest time. Liberia enjoins the world community, particularly the Security Council, to buttress the efforts of ECOWAS in restoring peace in our region, most especially in Mali.

As the current Chair of the four-nation Mano River Union, comprising Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia has committed itself to never allowing an inch of its territory to be used in order to destabilize its neighbours. In that context, we categorically condemn all attempts to undermine the peace and democratic gains in Côte d'Ivoire and are working closely with the Ivorian authorities and the United Nations peacekeeping bodies in both Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire to protect and consolidate the peace in our two countries. We call on all countries in our region to work in concert so that those intent on destabilizing some parts of our region are treated as enemies in all parts of it.

We are all part of a rapidly changing world in which the forces of globalization cannot be reversed. Our farming systems must adjust to the unusual weather conditions. The places where we live and work will need, in some cases, to be relocated from traditional safe areas. Our societies must also find responses to the distractions resulting from the demonstration effect. Developing countries, such as my own, must make globalization work if we are to achieve our growth targets and lift our people out of poverty. That means greater commitment and effort on our part to create an environment that ensures economic growth based on mutual benefits and responsibilities.

Since its founding, Liberia has been a complex nation, and the divisions that led to decades of war still run deep.

Our experience clearly shows that success has its pitfalls. Displaced citizens returning from refugee camps in the subregion and deportees from around the world swell the ranks of the desperate unemployed, thereby intensifying our vulnerability. Communities long deprived of basic services demand instant attention to their individual needs, thereby straining our capacity. Civil servants lacking a decent wage for two decades rightfully clamour for raises, thereby undermining the budgetary process.

As Liberia moves towards its tenth year of sustained peace, we can say with conviction that our country has turned the corner. Liberia is no longer a place of conflict, war and deprivation. We are no longer the country our citizens fled, our international partners pitied and our neighbours feared. Our stabilization efforts over the past six years have resulted in average annual growth of over 6 per cent, major foreign investment, expanded fiscal space and unprecedented debt cancellation. More important, we have earned our rightful place on an irreversible path to sustained peace, growth and development. Our Vision 2030, resulting from a robust nationwide consultation, is a long-term programme for transformation that prioritizes youth development, infrastructure, reconciliation and capacity development.

Yet, our Government is keenly aware of the challenges to be faced over the next three years. United Nations peacekeeping forces are gradually being withdrawn from Liberia. In our discussions with various United Nations teams that have come to Liberia — the technical assessment mission in March and the Security Council delegation in May — we have emphasized the need for a responsible transition, through a gradual process occurring over a period of three to five years. We also seek the alignment of transitional activities with our budget cycle, reflecting Government priorities.

We wish to express our appreciation to the United Nations, which has been a very committed and effective partner. We owe the Organization much gratitude for preserving an enabling environment for peacebuilding and State-building.

In conclusion, I wish to note that today, for the first time in two generations, Liberia has a second successive democratic Government elected by the will of the people. Despite the distractions, local and external, our people are determined to take their destiny into their own hands, and determined that our ambitious goal of making Liberia a middle-income country by the year 2030 will be achieved.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Liberia for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Michael Chilufya Sata, President of the Republic of Zambia

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Zambia.

Mr. Michael Chilufya Sata, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Michael Chilufya Sata, President of the Republic of Zambia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sata: I am greatly honoured to deliver my inaugural address to the General Assembly. Allow me to begin by congratulating the President on his election to oversee the sixty-seventh session of the Assembly, and to wish him every success in his position. His great country, Serbia, has historically enjoyed close ties with Zambia. We are therefore delighted to see him in that important seat.

I would also like to thank His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the steady manner in which he has continued to steer our global Organization. In Zambia we are particularly appreciative that, despite his busy schedule, the Secretary-General made time to visit our country earlier this year to undertake some important programmes.

About a year ago, I ended my decade-long career as an opposition politician when the people of Zambia overwhelmingly chose to change their political leadership through a democratic and peaceful electoral transition that ushered me into office as the fifth President of the Republic. I am indebted to the people of Zambia for once again undertaking that process in a peaceful manner.

It is my desire to utilize my experience at both ends of the leadership spectrum to make a worthwhile contribution to our democracy. I trust that Zambia will be able to share its lessons, as well as to learn from those with longer and even better democratic experiences.

As the Assembly is aware, we still face considerable challenges with respect to meeting the basic needs of the majority of the Zambian people. Shortly before I took office, there was much publicity about our positive macroeconomic indicators, but those results did not trickle down to the average citizen.

In the quest to develop at the micro level, the focus of my new Government is on enhancing agricultural productivity and access to markets for peasants and small-scale farmers, providing improved health services as close to the families as possible, improving the quality of education and facilitating access to decent housing and accommodation.

As we draw closer to the 2015 deadline for meeting the Millennium Development Goals, the international community needs to maximize its efforts towards achieving all eight goals. Zambia has made steady progress in achieving some of them.That is most visible in the education sector, which has seen an increase in the net enrolment of children in primary schools, while the health sector has seen reductions in the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

Notwithstanding our progress in tackling communicable diseases, Zambia is also attempting to address non-communicable diseases such as hypertension, diabetes and cancer.

While still considering matters related to the health sector, allow me to mention that my Government recently reviewed statistics that indicate that Zambia now has the second-highest rate of cervical cancer in the world. From 22 to 24 July, our capital, Lusaka, hosted the sixth annual Stop Cervical Cancer in Africa Conference, made up by the Forum of African First Ladies against Breast and Cervical Cancer and the African Parliamentarians and Health Ministers against Cancer. Just last year, former United States President George W. Bush travelled to Lusaka to launch the Pink Ribbon Red Ribbon campaign against breast and cervical cancer. He has since facilitated some generous contributions for the facilities now in place to fight the diseases. I would like to express the Zambian people's deep appreciation for all those efforts. However, the challenges in the health sector and elsewhere do not end there, and by no means have we stood by with folded arms.

Since my Government assumed power, in September 2011, our country has seen reasonable improvements in our economy, with an inflation rate that is down to 6.6 per cent and a gross domestic product growth rate of about 6 per cent, in spite of slow global economic trends. That has been attributed to enhancement of the investment policy framework and to improvement of the infrastructure and to human capital development. Despite those efforts, however, 60.5 per cent of the Zambian people continue to live in poverty.

My Government attaches similar importance to promoting good governance. As such, we have put in place a robust anti-corruption programme with improved and increased resources, which should set a new stage for our development. In addition, for the first time, Zambia has entrusted the governance of our legislative and judicial institutions to our women. The Inspector-General of Police, the Chief Justice and the Deputy Chief Justice, the chair of the anti-corruption commission and the commissioner of the drug enforcement commission are all women. I remain convinced that they will improve our record and surpass the nation's expectations.

Our national programmes are also focused on creating employment for our youth. Despite our vast natural resources, unemployment continues to be the most pressing problem for the younger generation. We are therefore looking to improve partnership with the various United Nations agencies and the rest of the international community to harness best practices from across the world. After all, it is the youth of 2012 who have made Zambia the African football champion.

Our Government has recognized that without the rule of law, social justice and an independent judicial system Zambia will not be able to attain sustainable social and economic development. As an initial step in that regard, our Government is currently undertaking a constitutional review process that is intended to ensure the primacy of the individual citizen and his liberties. We further wish to speed up the process of domesticating the international conventions that seek to bridge the gaps for minorities. Special emphasis will also be placed on improving the treatment of people with mental and physical challenges.

Zambia participated in the process leading to the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. Over the years, we have learned to appreciate the transboundary nature of matters such as our common environment. I would like to express appreciation to the Government of Brazil, the Chair of the Conference and all who made tremendous efforts to bring about the final outcome document of that historic conference. We are concerned, however, that as States Members of the United Nations we missed the opportunity to develop a formidable international process for promoting sustainable development. The failure to commit any funds to the means of implementation, and indeed the little progress in outlining the sustainable development goals, has underscored the lack of ambition in addressing our deteriorating environment, worsening inequality and a growing global population that shares the Earth's limited resources. In that instance, we failed the test for global solidarity.

Today, Zambia is encouraged that three committed global citizens have been appointed as co-Chairs of the Secretary-General's high-level panel to advise on the post-2015 global development agenda. We therefore would like to congratulate His Excellency President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia, Her Excellency President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia and His Excellency Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom. We wish them every success as they take on that onerous task. We must support the high-level panel to help recoup the lost opportunities of the recent past. As I indicated earlier, we are still a long way from attaining the Millenium Development Goals. Discarding them entirely would be to the detriment of the poorer nations. I trust that the Secretary-General's panel will take that into consideration.

The theme for this year's session of the General Assembly, "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means", is undeniably significant in the wake of the turmoil that continues to threaten international peace and security with the persistent conflict situations on the African continent in places such as the Sudan, South Sudan, Guinea-Bissau, Mali and Somalia. I therefore wish to report that our Government has in certain instances supported measures to help mitigate the humanitarian situation. I urge the international community to redouble its efforts in bringing peace to those troubled regions.

Farther afield, but no less important, is the situation in Syria, which has seen the indiscriminate killing of many innocent people. There is a need for concerted efforts to utilize peaceful means, such as mediation and negotiation, to put a halt to the killings and to restore peace to the country. Humanity has again been embarrassed by the unnecessary carnage. Despite the trouble spots, Zambia remains convinced that the United Nations has since 1945 performed quite well. However, circumstances have since changed greatly, and we need only look at the sovereign representation in this Hall to prove that.

It is therefore imperative that ongoing efforts to reform the United Nations be approached with renewed vigour. We are concerned that a seemingly difficult deadlock has been created in the reform process of the United Nations.

In addition, I wish to reiterate that despite the slow process of the reform of the Security Council, Africa should not relent or become frustrated. We should stand up and be counted. As enshrined in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration, Africa must be given two permanent seats with a veto immediately exercisable and two non-permanent seats to correct the historical injustice that the continent has suffered and also adhere to the geopolitical realities of modern times. Furthermore, the Council should improve its working methods.

I wish to appeal to all nations to renew their commitment and to strive for new common ground where individual national interests take a back seat. Just as many international conventions have been subject to innovative translations in the recent past, we must plan to be as flexible in creating a new United Nations, sooner rather than later. To ignore this need for transformation would be tantamount to killing the Organization.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Zambia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Michael Chilufya Sata, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Royal Highness Grand Duke Henri of Luxembourg, the Grand Duke of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Grand Duke of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

His Royal Highness Grand Duke Henri of Luxembourg, the Grand Duke of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Royal Highness Grand Duke Henri of Luxembourg, the Grand Duke of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

His Royal Highness Grand Duke Henri (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, let me congratulate President Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly. He can count on the full support of my country as he assumes this major responsibility.

The General Assembly is the central body of the United Nations architecture. Here all Member States are represented, and each has a vote, irrespective of its size, its population or its economic power. The Assembly truly is the concert of nations embodying the principle of the sovereign equality of all Member States. To President Jeremić, the conductor of the concert of States here assembled, we wish inspiration, passion and wisdom.

Luxembourg is proud to have been part, since the very beginning, of the peace project that is the United Nations.

Our then Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Joseph Beck, in presenting the Charter of the United Nations Charter — signed a few weeks earlier in San Francisco — to the Luxembourg Parliament on 9 August 1945, spoke the following visionary words:

> "It is in the work of the United Nations that our country found the hope of rebirth in its darkest hour; it is within the United Nations that it has taken up its place as an independent State, as a free country; it is among these peaceful countries, just united by the Organization of San Francisco in the wonderful hope of a lasting peace, that it will find the guarantees of a future which are necessary for its renewal".

History has vindicated him. Determined, with the other peoples of the United Nations, to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, Luxembourg found in the United Nations and in multilateralism in general the ideal framework to flourish as an independent, sovereign State, free to choose for itself. Luxembourg has been able to prosper thanks to the peace it has enjoyed since 1945. In return, we have resolutely committed ourselves, within the United Nations, to contribute to building peace and to promoting sustainable development for the greatest number possible.

President Jeremić has rightly chosen the peaceful settlement of disputes as the theme of the general debate at the current session. It is one of the overarching objectives of our Organization, aimed at enabling it to maintain international peace and security. To settle disputes peacefully, the Charter has attributed a major role not only to the Security Council, but also to the General Assembly and to the International Court of Justice.

The Syrian crisis, which has lasted already 18 months, continues to get worse. It has now claimed more than 20,000 victims. Repercussions on neighbouring countries continue to intensify. The crisis is a call on our collective conscience and puts our commitment to the test. Some are tempted to accuse the United Nations of inaction. However, the fault lies elsewhere. Those responsible for the terrifying violence, the war crimes, the egregious human rights violations and crimes against humanity committed in Syria will one day have to answer for them. Such is Luxembourg's firm conviction.

The failure to this day of attempts to resolve the Syrian crisis through peaceful means must not lead us to neglect the quest for political solutions to other crises.

Luxembourg has consistently advocated a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. That conflict has been going on for far too long. It is essential that the parties resume direct negotiations and negotiate a sustainable peace among themselves, with the support of the Quartet. The path will no doubt be arduous, but the objective is worth it for the Israelis, the Palestinians and the region as a whole. We would like to see an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, living side by side with the State of Israel in peace and security.

Luxembourg has for many years now supported the building of the Palestinian State at both the political and the economic levels. We also support Palestine's aspirations to assume its place among the nations of the world. We provide financial support to the Palestinian Authority in order to assist it in making its public administration and basic social services work, and we are also a reliable partner of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Under an agreement signed in February 2012, Luxembourg will provide assistance in the amount of €15 million to Palestine refugees throughout the period 2012-2015.

Allow me to give a few other examples to illustrate how Luxembourg is contributing to the peaceful settlement of international disputes. First, as was recalled during the High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law, Luxembourg was one of the very first States to recognize the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice as compulsory. The Court elucidates and develops international law and thereby strengthens peaceful relations between States. Next, Luxembourg supports preventive diplomacy and mediation activities as well as the good offices undertaken by the United Nations. Our support in that area also benefits regional organizations, such as the African Union. Finally, Luxembourg also supports civil society, as it did in 2010, when it backed the mediation efforts by the Community of Sant'Egidio between political and civil society actors in Guinea and the Niger.

Luxembourg, a multicultural and multilingual State by virtue of its history, its geographical location and the composition of its population, has often played the role of mediator between its large European neighbours and within the European Union.

Building on a balanced foreign policy, free from the legacy of a colonial past and defined by an unwavering commitment to multilateralism, Luxembourg is at the service of the United Nations when it comes to playing the role of honest broker and assuming the responsibilities that come with that role. In 2009, moreover, Luxembourg had the honour of chairing the Economic and Social Council at a crucial juncture marked by the devastating effects of the global economic and financial crisis of 2008.

My country has also been a linchpin of the Peacebuilding Commission since its inception in 2005. Since February 2011, the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg to the United Nations, Ambassador Sylvie Lucas, has chaired the Guinea configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. Luxembourg is honoured to be able to marshal the efforts of the international community in support of the authorities in Conakry, who have asked to be assisted in three priority areas: national reconciliation, security sector reform, and youth and women's employment. Our commitment stems from our conviction that we need to adopt a global approach towards peacebuilding and towards the maintenance of international peace and security — an approach that recognizes the intrinsic link between security and development.

Indeed, to ensure lasting peace, one must tackle the root causes of conflicts. Luxembourg is concentrating on two of these: social inequalities resulting from persistent poverty, and the increasing scarcity of natural resources as a result of climate change.

The fight against poverty is one of our stated priorities. Since 2000, Luxembourg has reached the goal set by the United Nations of dedicating at least 0.7 per cent of its gross national income to official development assistance. In 2009 and 2010, that assistance exceeded the threshold of 1 per cent of our gross national income. The Government of Luxembourg is determined to maintain that effort despite budgetary constraints. Our assistance is benefiting the least developed countries in particular. Here again, we exceed the goal set by the United Nations by dedicating more than 0.2 per cent of our gross national income to those countries, the majority of which are in Africa.

Beyond simple statistics, those figures reflect our spirit of solidarity towards developing countries. That spirit drives not only our political decision-makers and our development cooperation experts but also the numerous citizens who are acting through civil society organizations. My family is proud to participate in that movement of solidarity. My wife, the Grand Duchess, invests herself fully in the social sector as a UNICEF Eminent Advocate for Children, notably in Burundi. She has been passionate about microfinance for many years and has completed numerous projects in that area.

As the report of the Secretary-General (A/67/1) highlights, we have achieved, worldwide, some essential targets of the Millennium Development Goals ahead of time. However, the effects of global warming are catastrophic and are threatening to undo the progress that has been accomplished. In the least developed countries, the situation is particularly worrisome. It is therefore essential that we act resolutely in that area.

Progress has been made at the Conferences of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Cancún and then in Durban. We now need further commitments to be made in terms of reducing carbon emissions. Another major challenge lies in the mobilization of adequate financial and technological resources to enable the most vulnerable countries, in particular, the least developed countries, the landlocked developing countries and the small island developing States, to adapt to the effects of climate change. Luxembourg is acting to meet that challenge. We have thus decided to join an important programme of support for renewable energy that would meet the specific needs of Pacific small island developing States.

I personally attended the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Brazil in June in order to show how high a priority the sustainable development of our planet is for my country. None of us has the means to make it on our own. Our interdependence pushes us to act together. It is a matter of survival. And it is within the United Nations that we must organize our collective survival.

I would be remiss if I failed to mention another priority for Luxembourg in terms of conflict prevention, namely, disarmament and non-proliferation. Luxembourg promotes the constant search for security at the lowest level of armaments. It is a party to all relevant global and regional treaties and conventions and, despite the setback that the international community suffered this year, we remain committed to working towards an arms trade treaty, which would help Member States to effectively combat the scourge of uncontrolled arms circulation.

When conflicts break out despite attempts to prevent them, Luxembourg does not shy away from committing itself. My country participates quite regularly and actively in peacekeeping operations. At the present time, Luxembourg troops are contributing to efforts under the United Nations mandate in Kosovo, Lebanon and Afghanistan. Through its contributions to European Union missions, Luxembourg has also assumed responsibilities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in the fight against piracy off the coast of Somalia and in the Sahel region, where the international community must redouble its efforts to prevent terrorist groups linked to transnational organized crime from taking root.

All the areas of action I have touched upon here show how indispensable the United Nations is. If we are convinced of the relevance of a multilateral approach founded on the United Nations, we must give the Organization the means to be a true centre of multilateral action. For that, we need to continue to press ahead with United Nations reform, including Security Council reform. We are all aware of the need to make the Security Council more inclusive and more representative of today's realities and to make it more effective and transparent by continuing to improve its working methods.

Africa should finally take its rightful place on the Council, in particular among the permanent members. It is also important to ensure adequate representation for small States, which represent the vast majority of the Member States of the Organization.

Luxembourg's action in the United Nations since 1945 can be summarized by three key words: commitment, solidarity, responsibility. Yet, although Luxembourg has consistently proved its solidarity and commitment and has taken on responsibilities at the United Nations, it has not ever had the honour of serving on the Security Council. Building on its commitment to peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding activities, Luxembourg declared its candidature 11 years ago for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period 2013-2014. Luxembourg stands ready to share primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, which the States Members of the United Nations have conferred on the Security Council under the Charter.

Commitment to effective multilateralism does not depend on size. During his official visit to Luxembourg on 17 April 2012, when he addressed our Parliament and thus our country, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon made the following eloquent pronouncement:

> "You have shown that it is not the size of a nation's territory that makes the difference. It is the size of a nation's heart. It is the breadth of a nation's vision. It is the depth of a nation's promise to the wider world."

That recognition honours us. It has further strengthened Luxembourg's resolve to prove itself up to the task and to serve the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the Grand Duke of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg for the statement he has just made.

His Royal Highness Grand Duke Henri of Luxembourg, Grand Duke of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Viktor Yanukovych, President of Ukraine

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will hear an address by the President of Ukraine.

Mr. Viktor Yanukovych, President of Ukraine, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Viktor Yanukovych, President of Ukraine, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Yanukovych (*spoke in Ukrainian; English text provided by the delegation*): On behalf of Ukraine, I sincerely congratulate Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I wish him every success in the post and hope that all his actions bear fruit.

The theme of this year's debate, "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means", is always a pressing one. That imperative was enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations by its founding members, including Ukraine. I am convinced that the fundamental principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes remains today the cornerstone of the modern system of international relations. It is the underlying mission of our Organization and the immediate duty of every Member State.

Today, we are closely watching the situation in Syria, which remains extremely alarming. Ukraine shares the deep concern of the international community regarding the escalation of violence in that country. We call on all relevant parties to make every effort to settle the conflict on the basis of respect for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the universally recognized principles of international law.

The people of Ukraine have never been and will never be indifferent to human suffering. We make no distinction between our grief and that of others. Last year, thanks to Ukraine's humanitarian mission to Libya, people of many nationalities, mostly women and children, were evacuated and saved from hostilities. In referring to that case, we are speaking not just about one action but about Ukraine's resolute intention to use its capabilities to protect civilian populations in hot spots.

That is why this year, when the situation in Syria deteriorated, we immediately evacuated the first group of Ukrainian and Polish citizens who had stated their intention to return home. Let me assure the Assembly that any Ukrainian aircraft and ships available for evacuation purposes in hot spots will always be at the disposal of those in need of help, regardless of their nationality. Ukraine has approved a decision to extend humanitarian assistance using United Nations mechanisms to Syria's internally displaced persons and refugees. I am confident that through the joint efforts of the international community we will manage to ensure the safety of the civilian population in Syria. I believe in international solidarity in that regard.

Recently, on 11 September, we witnessed the tragic attack on the United States consulate in Libya. Ukraine roundly condemns any act of violence against diplomatic missions and their personnel.

For many years, Ukraine has actively supported the expansion of preventive diplomacy in international relations, with, of course, the leading role played by the United Nations. Guided by that approach, Ukraine initiated a dialogue in the Human Rights Council on the prevention of human rights violations, in particular by initiating a relevant thematic resolution.

Mr. Kanda (Ghana), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Ensuring early conflict prevention was among the key elements stressed by Ukraine during its first membership in the Security Council as an independent State, in 2000-2001. We also are conducting relevant work in the Peacebuilding Commission. The same goal features among the priorities of Ukraine's chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2013.

We intend, during our OSCE chairmanship, to make every effort to strengthen security in our region and to consolidate the democratic institutions of Member States. We will also promote the enhancement of the OSCE's efficiency as a regional organization, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. We will also underscore the need for new impetus to be given to the resolution of protracted conflicts in Europe and to address new threats and challenges to security, in particular energy security.

We will strive to increase OSCE efficiency in early conflict prevention. The Ukrainian chairmanship will actively contribute to the deepening of international cooperation and dialogue so as to maintain stability, resolve crisis situations and ensure post-conflict reconstruction. We will devote special attention to negotiations on the Transdniestria conflict; Ukraine has for many years actively participated in efforts to settle that conflict.

We will promote in every possible way the Nagorno Karabakh settlement process, as well as the Geneva discussions on security and stability in the Caucasus.

I would like to stress that Ukraine, as a non-bloc State, cannot but be concerned with the erosion of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. We consider that international legal document to be a cornerstone of stability on the continent and that therefore States parties should make every effort to ensure its fully fledged and efficient application.

Ukraine, in the framework of its OSCE chairmanship, will therefore pay special attention to the resolution of the crisis surrounding that Treaty. Peaceful settlement and conflict prevention will be the foundation and the starting point of Ukraine's activities if it is elected to non-permanent membership in the Security Council for 2016-2017.

At the beginning of this year, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon made public a five-year Action Agenda for the Organization. We fully support the priorities identified in the agenda and consider them a road map for United Nations activities in the near future.

We are currently going through a period of unprecedented change. Unfortunately, and especially in view of the world crisis, there are global tendencies towards the stagnation of economic development, growing poverty and social inequality, and increasing instability in certain States and regions.

It stands to reason that the only way to effectively counteract those threats is for the international community to deploy joint efforts. In that regard, we deem it especially advisable to increase the efficiency of international cooperation among security and law-enforcement agencies, develop best practices for addressing new challenges and threats, and introduce reliable confidence-building measures.

It should be noted that this year's United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) left open a number of issues, given the close interconnection of the environmental and socioeconomic aspects of modern life. However, we view the Rio+20 Conference as an important milestone in the development of international cooperation under the auspices of the United Nations in that sphere. The outcome document of the Conference has proved the ability of countries of different political and economic weights to reach a compromise, even in today's difficult times.

We support the complex approach that has been initiated in connection with sustainable energy for all, sustainable consumption and production, the elimination of hunger, and ensuring urban infrastructure development.

Ukraine welcomes the decision of the Conference to consolidate the United Nations Environment Programme with a view to a system-based management of the whole complex spectrum of environmental problems.

We deeply appreciate the establishment of a high-level political forum on sustainable development and the creation of an intergovernmental working group that will chart post-2015 sustainable development goals. That theme is of special interest for Ukraine, as demonstrated by the voluntary presentation of Ukraine's national achievements with respect to the Millennium Development Goals, which took place at the Economic and Social Council in July. I avail myself of this opportunity to assure the Assembly that participation in the sustainable development efforts of the United Nations will remain Ukraine's unwavering priority.

Global, man-made climate change represents a threat on a planetary scale. Therefore, we consider efforts to counteract that challenge to be a priority task for humankind as a whole. Let me note that Ukraine has voluntarily acceded to the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, undertaking to reduce its greenhouse-gas emissions by 20 per cent by 2020. Bearing that in mind, Ukraine will also promote discussions, in the framework of its future OSCE chairmanship, on the environmental impact of energy-related man-made activity, energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources.

Turning to international security problems, I should like to stress that Ukraine is deeply committed to the cause of bringing about a safer and more secure world. That commitment emanates from the national conscience of the people of Ukraine, who have experienced the scourge of war, totalitarianism and artificial famines, as well as the consequences of the

Chernobyl disaster, the largest man-made disaster in human history.

Therefore, Ukraine's aspiration to save the world from tragedies similar to those that we have experienced stems from the very hearts of the Ukrainians people. During the more than two decades of its independence, Ukraine has been a steadfast supporter of global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We have voluntarily renounced the third-largest nuclear arsenal in the world; we kept our word this year and completed the removal of the last stocks of highly enriched uranium from our country.

I consider those important steps, as well as the Kyiv Summit on the Safe and Innovative Use of Nuclear Energy, held last year, to be examples worthy of following. I also view in that light the joint declaration by Ukraine, Mexico and Chile — countries that have made special efforts to neutralize the risks of the exploitation of highly enriched uranium. The declaration remains open for signing. Unfortunately, the ambitious goal of the gradual complete liquidation of nuclear weapons remains unachieved.

In that regard, we insist that the security guarantees for States that have renounced their nuclear stockpiles and made other strategic concessions should be reflected in internationally binding legal instruments. This year Ukraine marked the twentieth anniversary of its participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

I am truly proud of the contribution of the sons and daughters of Ukraine — servicemen, law enforcement officers and civilian personnel who have served and continue to serve the noble ideals of peace under the United Nations flag. During these years, over 34,000 Ukrainians have performed noble peacekeeping missions in over 20 international operations under the United Nations mandate, from Guatemala to Timor-Leste, from Croatia to Mozambique. The experience they have acquired gives Ukraine the right to speak about achievements and advantages, as well as about problematic issues in modern United Nations peacekeeping operations. The latter include the threatening situation related to air mobility and legal gaps in investigations of crimes committed against Blue Helmets. I count on the continued support of Ukraine's initiatives aimed at resolving the current problems facing United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Ukraine welcomes the successful completion of the General Assembly's High-level Meeting on the rule of law that took place here in New York on 24 September. At the Meeting, Ukraine announced the political obligations that we will fulfil consistently. We are certain that international efforts to ensure the rule of law should remain centred around the United Nations.

At the same time, relevant international organizations should continue to play an important role in that sphere. For Ukraine, such an organization would be the Council of Europe and its Venice Commission in particular. Our close cooperation with the Council and the Commission has assisted us in making steady reforms to ensure the rule of law and thereby realize our aspirations to European integration. That process is actively promoted by Ukraine's Constitutional Assembly, a special political institution established to find a nationwide consensus on the provisions of the basic law. In the course of constructing and developing Ukraine's Constitution, we will study and take into account best practices from other countries.

I am deeply confident that global advances in each of the crucial areas I have mentioned would be impossible without a United Nations that is more efficient, viable and updated to the realities of the twenty-first century. The key here is to deepen United Nations reform, and primarily that of the Security Council. Ukraine's position is well known. We are ready to discuss all progressive concepts of Security Council reform capable of achieving the broadest possible consensus among States Members of the United Nations. The latter invariably make allowances for the legitimate requirements of all regional groups, in particular those of Eastern Europe.

Only the United Nations is up to the task of strengthening humankind to face contemporary challenges. The united will of all 193 Member States represents an overwhelming force capable of coping with the most complicated global crises. We must strengthen and preserve our unity. I believe that the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly will be conducive to that noble goal.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Ukraine for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Viktor Yanukovych, President of Ukraine, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Ghana.

Mr. John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mahama: In accordance with Ghanaian tradition and custom, I would like to begin with a basic but essential courtesy by expressing, on behalf of the Government and people of my beloved country, our deepest gratitude and most profound appreciation to the United Nations and to the numerous world leaders who mourned with us following the sudden and untimely death of our former President, Mr. John Evans Atta Mills. Ghanaians were touched by the many heartfelt messages of condolence and the glowing tributes that poured in from all over the globe. Those messages of goodwill strengthened us and enabled us to transcend the adversity of an occurrence that was unprecedented in the history of Ghana.

Mr. Mills was a dedicated and honourable statesman. He committed himself to bringing about improvement not only in the lives of Ghanaians but also in the lives of all other Africans, and indeed in the lives of individuals throughout the world. His death was a significant loss, and I am certain that he will be sorely missed by the international community.

With the first-hand knowledge of what it means for a nation to lose its leader, I also want to take this opportunity, on behalf of all Ghanaians, to extend condolences to the people of Ethiopia, Malawi and Guinea-Bissau, who also suffered the untimely demise of their sitting Presidents. May the souls of these great men, who gave so selflessly and helped to move our nations forward, rest in perfect peace.

One of the lessons that I learned from the tragedy of Mr. Mills's death — and it is a lesson worth sharing — is that it is during times such as these, times of great sorrow and pain, that we often reveal the very essence of who we are. That is as true of nations as it is of individuals. Over the past few months, Ghanaians have shown ourselves to be resilient and respectful of the values that promote peace and the institutions that safeguard the stability of our democracy. In our process of healing from that great loss, we have become more united and more determined to stay the course that we began in 1957, when we became the first sub-Saharan African nation to gain independence. In the process of healing, we have become more confident than ever before in our ability to create a better Ghana for our children.

Today's assembly of Heads of State is being held at a most critical time. Our world is being confronted with a number of significant challenges. War, conflict and strife are very much features of our present existence. Poverty, disease and famine continue to cripple the lives of many. Oppression, discrimination, illiteracy and unemployment still stifle the potential and shatter the hopes of millions.

Although examples of such conditions can be found on every continent, for a while, whether rightly or wrongly, they seemed to be automatically and primarily associated with Africa. Perhaps that is why it gives me such great pleasure to lead my address to the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session with news of progress from Ghana and stories of success from the African continent. Today, Africa boasts of some of the fastest-growing economies in the world, with Ghana being one of them. The number of countries engaged in conflict is steadily decreasing year after year. As that happens, we are also witnessing a steady increase in the number of countries that are governed along democratic lines. As is true of all new democracies, those systems are not without their flaws. While they may not be perfect, however, they are promising.

In fact, three African countries that lost their leaders this year — Ethiopia, Malawi and, of course, Ghana — experienced seamless and peaceful constitutional transitions of power to a new leadership. Members can see that, right now, something spectacular is happening in Africa. Growth is taking the place of stagnation; tranquillity the place of turmoil; and democratic governance, founded on the rule of law, the place of dictatorship.

There is no denying the visibility and viability of such significant developments. At the very least, they require a re-examination of the long-held views and misconceptions about the African continent. Those developments must also find expression in the manner in which developed nations relate to Africa. In many ways, that is already taking place, but the shift has only just begun. There is still much room for improvement. However, I am inspired by what I see, which are limitless possibilities for Africa and its engagement with the rest of the world.

As the United Nations Human Development Index attests, we in Ghana have made tremendous strides in a number of areas, with the aim of improving the living conditions of our people. Ghana is on track to achieve the targets set under the Millennium Development Goals. Significant progress has been made in the following areas: reducing poverty, gender parity in school enrolment, universal primary education, the provision of safe drinking water and the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Unemployment is a challenge that exists on a global scale. Nearly all nations, be they developed or developing, are grappling with finding ways to tackle that potential threat to their economic stability. In Ghana, we are attempting to deal with the problem as aggressively and as effectively as possible by finding long-term and sustainable solutions. That includes a programme that we will launch to encourage young people to become entrepreneurs, owning their own businesses and thereby becoming employers rather than employees.

In Africa, to say that the youth are our future is slightly misleading. Nearly 60 per cent of the continent's entire population is below the age of 35. Our young people are not only our future, but also our present. In Ghana, we have been working assiduously to empower and support our youth so as to ensure that they will not be left behind owing to fast-changing global economic, educational and social priorities.

The Government is implementing several social protection programmes across various sectors to cushion the poor and the vulnerable and to ensure that the fruits of our economic growth are distributed equitably. Under those programmes, massive investments have been and are still being made in education, health care, the modernization of agriculture, the social infrastructure and direct payments to the poorest households.

In furtherance of our battle against HIV/AIDS, a new five-year national strategic plan has been launched to consolidate the gains already made in reducing the prevalence of the disease. Under the new plan, our target is to achieve the virtual elimination of mother-to-child transmission and to expand access to antiretroviral therapy for persons living with HIV/AIDS.

The Government of Ghana has committed approximately $80 million as its contribution to the financing of the new strategic plan. However, that is not enough. We now find ourselves in a rather ironic situation that is threatening the advances we have made thus far. Ghana, like several other developing countries that have made remarkable headway in combating HIV/AIDS, is becoming a victim of its own success. As the numbers associated with the disease — the rates of infection and the mortality — go down, so too do the figures in the global funding for HIV/AIDS programmes. That leaves a considerable financing gap for many African countries, such as Ghana, that are trying not only to maintain their progress but also to move closer to the complete eradication of the disease.

In 1992, under the Constitution of its fourth republic, Ghana established itself as a multiparty democracy. Since then, we have held five successful elections, which have resulted in the smooth transfer of power from one democratically chosen leader to another. When it comes to transparency in the electoral exercise, Ghana is, in fact, held up as an example of excellence.

We are just a few weeks away from conducting our sixth presidential and parliamentary election. As President, I wish to assure the international community that that election will also be free, fair and peaceful. I am so certain of our stability through that process that I extend a warm welcome to any individual or organization that would like to come and monitor our elections.

The commitment to peace that I have pledged in the past, and which I am pledging anew today, is in keeping with a long-standing tradition that Ghana has established domestically and internationally. In the 1960s, when Ghana deployed 8,800 soldiers to what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo, it went on record as the first African country to participate in a United Nations peacekeeping mission. Since then, Ghana has continued to be an active and key partner in the United Nations peacekeeping programme. It was recently ranked among the 10 largest contributors of personnel to peacekeeping operations over the years. Currently, we have troops in five peacekeeping theatres throughout the world.

Ghana's consistent championing of peace is neither accidental nor coincidental, but by design and by determination. We have always recognized that peace is critical to development and to the overall improvement and enrichment of our people's lives. It is therefore no wonder that, in 1961, when United States President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps, its very first mission was in Ghana.

In the past two decades, Ghana's position on peace has been tested again and again as the West African subregion was ravaged by one civil war after another. However, we held firm to that position and will continue to do so.

Because Ghana wishes to coexist harmoniously with all our neighbours, when legislating policy, we are always conscious of the importance of peace. When offering asylum or a safe haven to refugees, we are always protective of our borders, making certain that political conflict and ethnic tension do not cross over onto our soil. The unfolding tensions in Côte d'Ivoire and Mali have been and continue to be of particular concern to us.

Let me say that Ghana will not allow its territory to be used to destabilize any other nation. We will not be the storehouse for any resources or weapons that may be used to disrupt the peace and development of another nation. We will not harbour any individual or group whose intent is to use Ghana as a base of operations to undermine the safety and security of our neighbours.

We will work under the ECOWAS protocol and will utilize whatever other tools of diplomacy are at our disposal to ensure that security and peace are established in Mali and Côte d'Ivoire and that those countries find a place alongside their fellow African countries in the continent's march forward towards prosperity.

Ghana has a strong belief in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Under the principle of the self-determination of peoples, Ghana was the first sub-Saharan country to emerge from colonial domination. Our nation's founding father, Mr. Kwame Nkrumah, proclaimed that the independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked with the total liberation of the African continent. In keeping with that right of self-determination, we wish to restate our support for an independent, prosperous Palestinian State, coexisting peacefully with a free, stable Israeli State.

We also reiterate our opposition to the continuous blockade on Cuba and call for an immediate lifting of that embargo.

The twenty-first century can readily be described as the century for Africa. Last year, of the 10 fastest growing economies in the world, six were African. Ghana, my own country, posted one of the highest gross domestic product growth rates, reaching as much as 14 per cent. Foreign direct investment amounted to some $1.5 billion across various sectors. That type of sustained growth in combination with security and democracy can only ensure an Africa that will bear no resemblance to the ghost of its former self. It will be an Africa where we create equal opportunities for women to realize their full potential and where there is respect for the rights of all human beings. The new Africa will wean itself from handouts and humanitarian relief. It will not continue to succumb to the corruption and oppression of despots.

The new Africa will stand on the world stage as a mutual partner. True partnership, of course, must be based on equality. When the founding fathers of the United Nations established the Security Council some 66 years ago, it was based on the reality of the time. Almost seven decades later, the paradigms and dynamics of the world have shifted dramatically. The lines that divided our world and categorized it into hierarchies of first and third worlds — those lines were drawn by settlers transforming once sovereign lands into colonies and territories — all of those boundaries have now become blurred.

Technology has made information more immediately accessible to the general public and individuals more accessible to one another. The world that we know today is not the same world our fathers and grandfathers knew. Our world is smaller, more integrated and familiar.

The current realities call for greater inclusion in order to consolidate our common security. They inform Ghana's call for an expansion of the Security Council to admit more members in order to have a meaningful impact on the many challenges that we all face. Africa is ready for that true and sincere partnership. Our time has come.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Ghana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ahmadinejad (*spoke in Farsi; English text provided by the delegation*): We have gathered here to ponder and work together in order to build a better life for the entire human community and for our nations.

Coming from Iran — the land of glory and beauty, the land of knowledge, culture, wisdom and morality, the cradle of philosophy and mysticism, the land of compassion and light, the land of scientists, scholars, philosophers, masters of literature and writers, the land of Avicenna, Ferdowsi, Hafiz, Maulana, Attar, Khayyám and Shahriar — I represent a great and proud nation that is one of the founders of human civilization and an inheritor of respected universal values. I represent a conscious nation that is dedicated to the cause of freedom, peace and compassion, a nation that has experienced the agony and bitter times of aggression and imposed wars and that profoundly values the blessings of peace and stability.

I am now here for the eighth time in the eighth year of my service to the noble people in this Assembly of sisters and brothers from across the world to show to the world that my noble nation, like its brilliant past, has a global vision and welcomes any effort intended to provide and promote peace, stability and tranquility, which can be only realized through the harmony, cooperation and joint management of the world.

I am here to voice to the Assembly and to the whole world the divine and humanitarian message of the learned men and women of my country, a message that Iran's great orator and poet, Saadi, presented to humanity in his eternal poetry:

> "Human beings are members of a whole,
> In creation of one essence and soul,
> If one member is afflicted with pain,
> Other members uneasy will remain."

I have talked over the past seven years about the current challenges, solutions and prospects of the future world. Today, I want to raise and discuss such issues from a different perspective. Thousands of years have passed since the children of Adam — peace be upon him — started to settle down in various parts of the Earth. Peoples of different colours, inclinations, languages, customs and traditions persistently pursued their aspirations to build a noble society for a more beautiful life, blessed with lasting peace, security and happiness.

Despite all of the efforts on the part of righteous people and justice-seekers and the sufferings and pains endured by masses of people in the quest to achieve happiness and victory, the history of humankind is marked, except in rare cases, with unfulfilled dreams and failures.

Imagine, for a moment, that there had been no egoism, distrust, malicious behaviour or dictatorships, with no one violating the rights of others. Imagine that humanitarian values had been viewed as the criterion for social dignity instead of affluence and consumerism

Imagine if humankind had not experienced the Dark Ages and if the centres of power had not hindered the flourishing of knowledge and constructive thoughts. Imagine if the Crusades and the ensuing periods of slavery and colonialism had not happened, and if the successors of the Dark Ages had followed a course based on humanitarian principles.

Imagine if the First and Second World Wars in Europe, the wars in Korea, Viet Nam, Africa, Latin America and in the Balkans not happened, and if, instead of the occupation of Palestine and imposition of a fake Government, displacement and genocide of millions of people around the globe, the truth behind those wars based on justice had been revealed. Imagine if Saddam Hussein had not invaded Iran and the big

Powers had supported the rights of the Iranian people instead of siding with Saddam.

Imagine if the tragic incident of 11 September and the military actions against Afghanistan and Iraq that left millions killed and homeless had not happened, and if, instead of killing and throwing the culprit into the sea without trial or without informing the world and people of America, an independent fact-finding team had been formed to make the general public aware of the truth behind the incident and to prepare the way for the perpetrators to be brought to justice.

Imagine if extremism or terrorism had not been used to secure political goals, if arms had been turned into pens, and if military expenditures had been used to promote well-being and amity among nations. Imagine if the drums of ethnic, religious or racial conflicts not been beaten, and if differences had not been used for the purpose of advancing political agendas.

Imagine if the right to criticize the hegemonic policies and actions of world Zionism had been recognized so as to allow the world media to report freely and shed light on the realities, instead of making deceitful gestures of seeming to back freedom but in a way that offends the sanctities and most sacred beliefs of human beings and divine messengers, who, as the purest and most compassionate human beings, are the gift of the Almighty to humankind.

Imagine if the Security Council had not been under the domination of a limited number of Governments, thus preventing the United Nations from carrying out its responsibilities in a just and equitable manner. Imagine if international economic institutions had not been under outside pressures and were allowed to perform their duties and functions by using their expertise based on fairness and justice.

Imagine if world capitalists had not weakened or victimized national economies in order to make up for their own mistakes. Imagine if integrity and honesty had prevailed in international relations and if all nations and Governments were treated equally and justly in global efforts to build and expand happiness for all humankind. And imagine if tens of other unfavourable situations had not occurred throughout history, how beautiful and pleasant our lives and how lovely the history of humankind would have been.

Let us take a look at the state of the world today. With regard to the economic situation, poverty is on the rise and the gap between the rich and the poor is widening. The total foreign debt of 18 industrialized countries exceeds $60 trillion, while the repayment of half of that amount would be sufficient to eradicate poverty in the world. Economies dependent on consumerism and the exploitation of people only serve the interests of a limited number of countries.

The creation of worthless paper assets through influence and control over the world's economic centres constitutes the greatest abuse in history and is considered a major contributor to the global economic crisis. It has been reported that $32 trillion in paper assets were printed by one Government alone. Development planning, based on a capitalist economy, which runs in a vicious circle, triggers unhealthy and devastating competition and is a failed practice.

With regard to the cultural situation, from the standpoint of the politicians who control the centres of world power, concepts such as moral principles, purity, honesty, integrity, compassion and self-sacrifice are typically rejected as defunct and outdated notions and an impediment to the accomplishment of their goals. They openly talk about their disbelief in the relevance of ethics to political and social affairs.

Authentic and indigenous cultures, the product of centuries — old national efforts, the common denominator of which reflects profound human feelings and love towards beauty and is the force that breeds diversity, cultural life and social dynamism, are under constant attacks and risk extinction. A specific lifestyle, devoid of individual or social identity, is being imposed on nations by the organized and systematic destruction and the humiliation of identities.

The family, the most noble social institution and a centre emanating love and humankind, has been seriously weakened and its constructive role is on the decline. The sublime role and nature of women as heavenly beings, manifestations of the divine image and beauty and the main pillars of every society, have been damaged and abused by the powerful and the wealthy. The human soul has become frustrated and the essence of humankind humiliated and suppressed.

With regard to the political and security situation, unilateralism, the application of double standards and the imposition of wars, instability and foreign occupation in order to ensure economic interests and expand dominance over sensitive centres of the world have become the order of the day. The arms race and intimidation by nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction by the hegemonic Powers have become prevalent. Testing new generations of ultra-modern weaponry and the pledge to disclose those armaments in due time is now being used as part of a new language of threat against nations to coerce them into accepting a new era of hegemony. The continued threat by the uncivilized Zionists to resort to military action against our great nation is a clear example of this bitter reality. A state of mistrust has cast its shadow on international relations, while there is no trusted or just authority to help resolve world conflicts. No one feels secure or safe, even those who have stockpiled thousands of atomic bombs and other arms in their arsenals.

With regard to the environment, which is a common resource and heritage of all humankind that ensures man's survival, it has been seriously damaged and devastated as a result of the irresponsible and excessive use of resources, particularly by capitalists across the world. That situation that has caused massive drought, flood, and pollution, inflicting irreparable damage and seriously jeopardizing human life on Earth.

Despite advances in scientific knowledge and technology, the aspirations of Adam's children have not yet been fulfilled. Does anybody believe that the continuation of the current order is capable of bringing about happiness for human society? Today everyone is discontented and disappointed with the current international order. Human beings do not deserve the continuous sufferings brought about by the present situation. The God of wisdom and compassion, who loves all human beings, has not ordained such a destiny for humankind. He has ordered humans, as the supreme creatures, to make the best and most beautiful life on Earth along the lines of justice, love and dignity.

We must therefore think of a solution. Who is responsible for all the sufferings and failures? Some people try to justify it by saying that everything is normal and a reflection of divine will, thereby putting the blame on States for all prevalent vices and evils. They are of the opinion that it is States that succumb to discrimination and tyranny. It is States that surrender to dictatorship and greed.

It is States that submit to the hegemony and arrogance of expansionist Powers. It is States that are influenced by the propaganda tactics of other Powers, and most of the evils in our world are the result of their passivity and willingness to live under the sway of the world Powers.

Such are the arguments raised by those who tend to blame States for the unfavourable conditions that prevail around the world, with the aim of justifying the attitudes and destructive behaviour of the ruling minority. Such supposedly genuine claims can in no way justify continuing with the current oppressive international order, because in fact poverty is being imposed on States, and the Powers' are pursuing their ambitions and goals either by deceit or by resort to force. To justify their inhuman actions, they promote the theory of the survival of the fittest.

Yet in principle, what most Governments and States and their peoples are seeking is fairness; they submit humbly to what is right and what they want is to foster dignity, prosperity and constructive relations. The vast majority of people have no interest in expanding their territories, nor do they seek enormous wealth. They have no disputes among themselves on matters of principle and have never played a part in unleashing the disastrous events of history. I do not believe that Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists or others have any problems among themselves, or are hostile to one another. They get along comfortably and live together in an atmosphere of peace and amity. They are all devoted to the cause of justice, purity and love.

The general tendency of States has always been to work towards positive common aspirations to the qualities that reflect great beauty and nobility, divine and human. The current abysmal state of the world and the bitter incidents of its history are due mainly to iniquitous management by the self-proclaimed centres of power, which have dedicated themselves to the Devil. The order that is rooted in the anti-human concepts of slavery and colonialism, old and new, is responsible for poverty, corruption, ignorance, oppression and discrimination in every corner of the world.

The current world order has certain characteristics. It is founded on materialism and thus is unmoored from moral values. It has been shaped by selfishness, deception, hatred and animosity. It believes in labelling human beings, humiliating other nations and dominating and trampling on the rights of others. It seeks to expand its domination by spreading discord and conflict among ethnic groups and nations. It aims to monopolize power, wealth, science and technology. The policies of the world's main centres of power are based on the principles of domination and conquest. Such Powers seek only supremacy; they do not desire peace and they definitely do not promote it in the service of their nations.

Are we to believe that those who spend hundreds of millions of dollars on election campaigns have the interests of the peoples of the world at heart? Despite what the big political parties in the capitalist countries claim, the money that goes into election campaigns is usually nothing but an investment on the part of the ruling parties. In such countries, people have to vote for parties that represent only a small percentage of voters. The will and views of the masses have little impact or influence on big decisions, especially those concerning major domestic and foreign policies in the United States and Europe. Their voices go unheard even when they constitute 99 per cent of their societies. Human and ethical values are sacrificed in order to win votes, and any willingness to listen to the demands of the people has become merely a tool to be used at election time. The current world order is discriminatory and based on injustice.

What should be done, and what is the way out of the current situation? There is no doubt that the world is in need of a new order and a fresh way of thinking. We need an order that recognizes man as God's supreme creature, possessing both material and spiritual qualities and a pure and divine nature, filled with the desire to seek justice and truth; that aims to restore human dignity and believes in universal happiness and the possibility of perfection; that seeks peace, lasting security and welfare for everyone, in all walks of life, around the globe; that is founded on trust and kindness and brings our thoughts, hearts and hands closer together and in which rulers love their people; that is just and fair, makes everybody equal before the law, and has no double standards; that allows world leaders to see themselves as committed servants of their people, not their superiors; and that sees authority as a sacred gift from a people to its rulers, not an opportunity to amass power and wealth.

Can such an order exist without the contribution of all to the way the world is run? It is abundantly evident that when all peoples and Governments start to think, commit themselves to the aforementioned principles, focus on internationally important issues and participate in decision-making, it will be possible for their desires to be realized. In raising collective awareness, the possibility of governing the world jointly becomes more real and the chances of putting it into practice increase.

Together, therefore, we must trust in God Almighty and stand up to the rapacious minority with all our strength in order to isolate them, so that they can no longer decide the destiny of other nations. We must believe in the bounty of God's blessing and mercy and seek it within the integration and unity of human society. Governments that are born of free national will must believe in their own unlimited capabilities and know that they can achieve victory if they fight fiercely to combat an unjust world order and to defend human rights.

We must lay the ground for united world rule by insisting on justice in all its aspects, strengthening unity and friendship and expanding economic, social, cultural and political interaction in independent and specialized organizations. We must care about the interests of all the people of the world and join hands to reform the current United Nations entities with joint efforts and cooperation. The United Nations belongs to its Member States, and therefore the existence of any discrimination among those Members is a great insult to all. Any discrimination or monopolization of power in the Organization is unacceptable.

We must make a more coordinated effort to create, promote and firmly establish the language needed to enable us to design the bodies needed for a united world rule that is imbued with justice, love, freedom and amity. Participation in global management is the basis of lasting peace.

The Non-Aligned Movement, the second largest transregional group after the United Nations, held its sixteenth summit in Tehran with the motto of "Joint global management", cognizant of the importance of this issue and of the shortcomings of the current mismanagement in the emergence of crises and problems afflicting the world today. During the summit, participating Heads of State and representatives of more than 120 countries underscored the necessity of more serious and effective participation of all nations in global management.

Fortunately, we are now at a historic juncture. On the one hand, Marxism is no longer around; it has been practically eliminated from management systems. On the other hand, capitalism is bogged down in a self-made quagmire. Indeed, it has reached a deadlock and appears to be unable to come up with any noteworthy solutions to the world's various economic, political, security and cultural problems. The Non-Aligned Movement is proud to again emphasize the rightfulness of its historic decision to reject the power polarities and unbridled hegemony ruling the world. On behalf of the members of Non-Aligned Movement, I would like to invite all the countries in the world to play a more active role in making it possible for everybody to contribute to global decision-making processes. The need to remove structural barriers and to encourage the process of universal participation in global management has never been greater.

The United Nations lacks the efficiency to bring about the required changes. If this inefficiency persists, nations will lose hope in the ability of global structures to defend their rights. If the United Nations is not restructured, international interactions and the spirit of collective global cooperation will be tarnished, and the standing of the United Nations will be damaged.

The United Nations, which was established with the purpose of expanding justice and reinstituting universal human rights, has in practice been engulfed by discrimination, preparing a supportive ground for domination by a few powerful countries. Consequently, United Nations inefficiency has increased. Moreover, the existence of the veto right and monopolization of power in the Security Council have made it nearly impossible to defend the rights of the nations.

The issue of United Nations restructuring is vital; the need has been emphasized time and again by State representatives. That goal that yet to be accomplished. I would like to urge the States Members of the United Nations and the Secretary-General and his colleagues to place the issue high on their agenda and to devise an appropriate mechanism to make it happen. The Non-Aligned Movement stands ready to aid the United Nations in that essential endeavour.

Creating peace and lasting security with a decent life for all, although a great and historic mission, can be accomplished. Almighty God has not left us alone in that mission and has said that it will surely happen. If it does not, then that will contradict his wisdom. God has promised us a man of kindness, a man who loves people and absolute justice, a man who is a perfect human being, named the Imam Al-Mahdi — a man who will come in the company of Jesus Christ and the righteous. By using the inherent potential of all the worthy men and women of all nations — I repeat, the inherent potential of all the worthy men and women of all nations — he will lead humanity into achieving its glorious and eternal ideals.

The arrival of the ultimate saviour will mark a new beginning, a rebirth and a resurrection. It will be the beginning of peace, lasting security and genuine life. His arrival will be the end of oppression, immorality, poverty and discrimination and the beginning of justice, love and empathy. He will come, and he will cut through ignorance, superstition and prejudice by opening the gates of science and knowledge. He will establish a world brimming with prudence, and he will prepare the ground for the collective, active and constructive participation of all in global management. He will come to grant kindness, hope, freedom and dignity to all humankind as a gift. He will come so that humankind will taste the pleasure of being human and being in the company of other humans.

He will come so that hands will be joined, hearts will be filled with love, and thoughts will be purified and will be at the service of the security, welfare, happiness, well-being and peace of all. He will come to return all the children of Adam, irrespective of their skin color, to their innate origin after a long history of separation and division, linking them to eternal happiness and joy. The arrival of the ultimate saviour, Jesus Christ and the righteous, will bring about an eternally bright future for humankind, not by force or by waging wars but through thought-awakening and developing kindness in everyone. Their arrival will breathe new life into the cold and frozen hearts and bodies of the world. He will bless humankind with a spring that puts an end to our winter of ignorance, poverty and war with the tidings of a season of blossoming. He will end the winter of ignorance for humankind.

Now we can sense the sweet scent and the soulful breeze of the spring, a spring that has just begun and that does not belong to a specific race, ethnicity, nation or region, a spring that will soon reach all the territories in Asia, Europe, Africa and the Americas. He will be the spring of all the justice seekers, freedom lovers and the followers of heavenly prophets. He will be the spring of humankind and the greenery of all ages. Let us join hands and clear the way for his eventual arrival, with empathy and cooperation, in harmony and unity. Let us march on this path to salvation for the thirsty souls of humankind to taste immortal joy and grace.

Long live this spring, long live this spring — again and again, long live this spring.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mwai Kibaki, President of the Republic of Kenya

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Kenya.

Mr. Mwai Kibaki, President of the Republic of Kenya, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mwai Kibaki, President of the Republic of Kenya, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kibaki: It is an honour and a pleasure for me to once again address the General Assembly.

Kenya is at a time in its history that is full of hope for a bright future. Over the past 10 years, our country has enjoyed a sustained blossoming of democracy. In the year 2010, Kenya adopted a new Constitution. With that constitution, we further secured the human rights and civil liberties of our citizens and entrenched constitutional governance and justice.

Equally important, over the past 10 years, we have scored significant victories against diseases including HIV and AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other childhood and adult maladies. Hundreds of thousands more children have found their way into school and many more adults have found new life skills through training and capacity-building. We have also pulled hundreds of thousands of Kenyans out of poverty and put them on the pathway to economic independence and self-reliance. In doing so, we have also expanded our economic base, opening up new and extensive infrastructure, energy and information technology projects.

The achievements in our country have been attained through respect for the rule of law, sound policies, improved governance and open and innovative democracy. However, as all Kenyans recognize, we still have a lot more work to do. Poverty, disease and unemployment still remain big challenges for us. Nevertheless, I am confident that we will seize opportunities to innovate and invest, and thus keep our country on the road to even greater prosperity.

In accordance with this year's theme, "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means", Kenya's achievements over the past 10 years have been built on the bedrock of the peaceful resolution of disputes and situations in our country. In addition, it is our belief that inclusive solutions to disputes can bring about lasting peace. We know from our own history and that of our neighbours that when conflicts and disagreements are not resolved peacefully what follows are the tragic consequences of suffering, bloodshed and the collapse of economic and social development.

That is why we are convinced that Kenya's own well-being and prosperity are hinged on sustained peace, security, stability and inclusive democracy in our region. My country therefore remains supportive of efforts spearheaded by the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the East African Community for the peaceful and inclusive settlement of disputes and situations. Such regional efforts are central to the future of multilateral peacebuilding. They must be the building blocks of international efforts to maintain peace and security in our region and the world.

Kenya therefore welcomes the Secretary-General's initiative to convene a series of high-level meetings during this week to discuss the political and security situations in Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan and South Sudan. With regard to Somalia, Kenya joined the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and through the combined efforts of AMISOM and Transitional Federal Government forces, we have witnessed the progressive liberation of large areas of Somalia from Al-Shabaab occupation. That development enabled the Transitional Government to focus on the implementation of the Kampala Accord road map, with a view to forming a unified Government anchored on the pillars of good governance and the rule of law. We are encouraged by recent developments in

Somalia, in particular the election of a new President, Prime Minister and Parliament and the adoption of a new Constitution.

There are millions of Somalis who are forced to live outside Somalia. More than 650,000 are in one refugee camp in Kenya. Following the liberation of large sections of south-central Somalia from Al-Shabaab, we look forward to working with the relevant United Nations agencies and the international community in facilitating the return of Somali refugees to those areas. That will enable the effective participation of all Somalis in rebuilding Somalia.

With regard to the Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan, Kenya is appreciative of the positive developments of 4 August related to the long-standing dispute over oil resources. We hope that that important agreement marks a first step towards reducing tensions between the two sister countries. Kenya also appreciates the efforts of the international community, both directly and through the African Union, and encourages the two sides to work towards reaching a compromise. I especially commend the African Union High-level Implementation Panel for its determination and leadership in steering the negotiations. We are confident that both countries will agree to urgently address contentious issues on border disputes. Kenya will continue to support efforts to find a peaceful and lasting solution to disputes between the people of the Sudan and South Sudan. We encourage the international community to redouble its efforts to fast-track support for social and economic development in South Sudan for the benefit of citizens of the new country.

Kenyans are saddened by the great suffering and bloodshed endured by populations around the world, especially in the Middle East, the Horn of Africa and Central Africa. It is our belief that nations should embrace dialogue and the peaceful settlement of disputes instead of rushing to arms, for suffering and bloodshed will ensue. We call upon all warring parties in the world to lay down their arms and pursue the path of peace, dialogue and the inclusive resolution of disputes.

We also remain concerned that no progress has been achieved on the issue of Palestine. As I said last year here in the General Assembly, Kenya believes in the two-State solution, in which the territorial integrity of Palestine within the 1967 borders is upheld and the peace and security of Israel are both assured and guaranteed. In that regard, it is our hope that Palestine will soon be welcomed into the community of nations with full membership in the United Nations.

There can be no lasting peace without sustainable and inclusive development. Kenya therefore greatly appreciates the achievements of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held earlier this year in Brazil. Kenya is encouraged that, in line with recommendations proposed during the Conference, the General Assembly has placed high on its agenda for this session some of the decisions we took in Rio de Janeiro. That is indeed an indication of our collective political will to ensure that the decisions contained in the outcome document are implemented.

Key among those is the decision to strengthen the institutional framework for sustainable development, including the upgrading of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Kenya appreciates that historic decision to strengthen and upgrade UNEP, which will enable it to fulfil its mandate effectively. Kenya reiterates its commitment to continue to host and facilitate the work of a revamped UNEP, and we look forward to its eventual transformation into a full-fledged organization for the global environment.

Finally, we are all aware that many of our modern disputes and conflicts revolve around concerns about water, available land and agriculture, forests, rivers and lakes. Dealing with our environment and the effects of climate change is therefore an important part of resolving disputes and conflicts around the world. Strengthening global institutions that deal with the environment, biodiversity and climate change must therefore be a core part of our strategy to avoid conflict and disputes among the peoples of the world.

It is important that, as the community of nations, we invest in the peaceful settlement of international disputes. However, we must invest first in the prevention of disputes and, secondly, in addressing the root causes of conflicts, such as poverty, inequality, disregard for international law and disrespect for each other's sociocultural and religious beliefs, among others. Only by addressing the root causes of conflict and disputes can we hope to find lasting peace in a just and equitable world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Kenya for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mwai Kibaki, President of the Republic of Kenya, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Bronisław Komorowski, President of the Republic of Poland

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Poland.

Mr. Bronisław Komorowski, President of the Republic of Poland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Bronisław Komorowski, President of the Republic of Poland, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Komorowski (*spoke in Polish; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): May I offer my warm congratulations to Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election to the position of President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session.

Following the experiences of recent years, the world is poised at a difficult moment in its development. The weakness of international institutions in the face of economic, security, humanitarian and environmental problems is indisputable, and yet those institutions were designed to resolve such problems. That also applies to the Security Council, especially in the context of the conflict in Syria. It is also clear that international financial institutions are not capable of handling the destructive volatility of financial markets, which results from the opaqueness and arbitrariness of powerful private interests operating in this area.

The signals coming from Asia point to an undiminished number of tensions and disputes. We have been following with concern the tension resulting from the Iranian nuclear programme. We are worried by the increasingly tangible threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and of an intensified arms race among the Gulf States.

The results of the Mission in Afghanistan are not entirely satisfactory. We must learn a lesson from the shortcomings of the strategy devised for that country thus far. The approach that suggests the military option first is not a suitable method for resolving complex internal conflicts.

The hopes raised by the Arab Spring have been justified, but only to a certain extent. The civil war in Syria and the resulting toll in lives, as well as the United Nations and Arab League's inability to contain it, cast a shadow across the entire region. The tragic death of American diplomats and the circumstances of their death should also prompt reflection among all those persuaded of the automatic nature of democratic transformations.

When we signed the United Nations Charter, which is the constitution of the contemporary international order and testifies to our faith in a better world, we pledged our readiness to make concerted efforts and cooperate in pursuit of the ideals invoked in it. One of the main paths to a more secure and fair world is the peaceful resolution of disputes and conflicts. That concept is the main theme of this year's session of the Assembly, and the choice of that subject is timely. In recent years, we have seen numerous occasions in which a commitment pursuant to Article 2 of the Charter was ignored, with very dramatic consequences. The best example is the crisis in Syria, but such situations also occur in other parts of the world.

Throughout the twentieth century, the international community developed various means and ways to achieve a peaceful settlement to disputes at both the global and regional level. Volumes have been written on the subject. There are many international institutions involved in this field, as well as many renowned and prominent experts, diplomats and politicians. Some of them, including Jimmy Carter and Martti Ahtisaari, have been rightly acknowledged by being awarded a Nobel Peace Prize. They were able to effectively use existing procedures to quell conflicts and peacefully resolve difficult disputes of an international or internal nature that otherwise could have escalated into international conflicts. However, success was not possible everywhere. If success was not achieved, it was because of the absence of one crucially important factor without which it is impossible to settle a dispute in a peaceful, lasting and just manner, namely, realizing the obvious truth that without compromise one cannot arrive at a lasting solution to any conflict. That is embedded in the very nature of conflict.

In that connection, I would like to refer to the Polish experience with the Solidarity movement and the round table talks of the spring of 1989. Both sides of the deep social conflict of those days — the communist regime, on the one hand, and the champions of democratic transformation who ultimately strove to overthrow communism, on the other — demonstrated wisdom and were thereby able to reach a compromise, even if it was not fully satisfactory to either party. It was nevertheless a compromise that opened perspectives for further change, which extended beyond Poland to the entire region of Central and Eastern Europe. What made that compromise possible was the capacity for self-control by those actors who ultimately strove to achieve a revolutionary change. Let us recall that all previous attempts undertaken by the democratic opposition outside the system ended in military interventions, bloodshed, tens of thousands of refugees and further repression. That could have also been the case on a massive scale in the spring of 1989.

In the long run, the capacity for self-control and the strength of a wise compromise make a much better solution than pushing one's own demands and trying to advance one's own arguments by force. We know all too well what happens in the latter case; it usually ends in people taking up arms in order to prove their rightness by military means. In line with the rules of geopolitics, both parties to a conflict seek allies abroad. Finally, the logic of holding each other in check and an "all or nothing" mentality start to prevail. Costs are no longer counted. As the conflict continues, the scale of the crisis grows. The situation develops into a truly international one. In order to fend off any further escalation of antagonisms, major humanitarian and stabilization operations supported by the army and police force are inevitable. The process of reconciliation, normalization and reconstruction is greatly delayed.

We have seen that process in various situations in different countries. It can be avoided provided that, from the very outset of a dispute, both sides anticipate dialogue, acknowledge the limits of what is feasible, show sensitivity to the potential costs of conflict and seek compromise. The art of self-control and of wise compromise, embodied by Nobel Prize winners Lech Walesa and Nelson Mandela, are worth promoting.

However, this approach is not promoted often enough in the context of efforts for peaceful conflict resolution and situations that may lead to conflict. Syria is a dramatic example of how a wasted chance for compromise can unfold. We expect that an end will be soon put to the bloodshed in Syria and that the conflict will be settled on the basis of United Nations principles, using the instruments available to the Organization. May the new United Nations envoy for that conflict never lack determination in the fulfilment of his mission.

After many centuries of antagonism, disputes and conflicts in Europe, yet another preventive method was invented in order to do away with wars and stop differences and competing claims from turning into bloody crises. That method is the process of regional integration, which was ushered in after the Second World War by the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community. The project's hidden intention was to firmly establish the "no war" principle. It was not enough to ban war, as had been done through the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928. What was needed was for war to be made impossible by the process of integration. Through the establishment of the Community and its expansion to new areas of integration, including most of the countries on the continent, the disputes threatening Europe's security and peace were consigned to the past. Even if that experience cannot be used in a completely copy-and-paste manner, it can still serve as an example to other regions of the world.

The plight of civilian populations, in particular children, is the most dramatic consequence of the lack to self-control and the absence of a culture of, and willingness to, compromise in contemporary disputes and internal and international conflicts. The methods and means of combat spare soldiers, sometimes at the expense of innocent civilians, especially children, who often become a target of military operations. This phenomenon is related to efforts to move the aggression to the other side. The responsibility for civilian casualties, even if unintended, can also fall on international and peacekeeping forces.

Based on experience gathered by the international community, the contentious idea of humanitarian intervention has been replaced with the concept of the "responsibility to protect". I believe that this was a very wise path to take to end the stalemate that emerged in this area more than 10 years ago. The concept of the responsibility to protect has been approved by the entire international community and has been a United Nations norm since 2005.

As we know, a norm and its practice may sometimes be worlds apart. Given the developments that have unfolded over the past decade, including several events in North Africa, and in the light of the humanitarian tragedies, in particular the suffering and death of thousands of innocent children, that should stir people's hearts and consciences, we cannot afford for the responsibility to protect to remain a dead letter. What we put forward for the Assembly's consideration is that the United Nations should initiate work on defining a catalogue of instruments to be applied in situations that entail the responsibility to protect. This is about the international community being effective without exceeding a mission's mandate and inciting disputes on that count.

This is a particularly important consideration for us in Poland. Our nation has more than once fallen victim to crimes perpetrated on a mass scale. Prompted by that awareness, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, special rapporteur on crimes in the Balkans for the Human Rights Commission, embarked on his mission 20 years ago. The effectiveness of the international community when faced with flagrant violations of human rights on a mass scale and crimes and suffering that call for rapid reaction, as in Syria these days, depends largely upon the credibility of our action in previous such situations. We must always act in good faith and in line with the mandate given to us.

I am speaking on behalf of a country that, over the past 20 years, has managed to travel the difficult road from a totalitarian regime, the collapse of its economy and mass social unrest curbed by force to democratic stability, economic growth and the ability to support peaceful transformations beyond its borders. Thirty years ago, when martial law was imposed in order to crush the Solidarity revolution, it was suggested that Poland's attempt to enter the world of democracy would entail potential imbalances between the East and West, and even a war between the Warsaw Pact nations and NATO — in effect, a world war.

Fortunately, those days are gone. Hardly anyone would think in such terms now. Today, Poland is a free country that develops its relations without limitations, shares its experience, spreads the word about the benefits derived from our transition to democracy and extends development and humanitarian aid. We are a country that has had a positive economic growth rate for the past 20 years.

Poland's commitment to the stability of the European integration process mirrors our understanding of the process as one that serves the security of all of Europe and its neighbourhood. That is why we actively endeavour to bring together the two parts of Europe once divided by the Cold War. The European Union Eastern Partnership programme was designed to that end, with Poland and Sweden as its initiators and promoters.

Poland readily offers support to and shares experiences with countries and societies embarking on the road to democracy in North Africa, Asia and Europe. To the extent we are able, Poland is involved in developing contact with countries from different regions and civilizations. Our policy in that regard arises from the conviction that an effective United Nations is as urgently needed today as it was in the days of the Cold War. The world cannot be driven by a bipolar or multipolar concert of Powers. Of course, although the Powers will not cease to exist, stability and regulation of the international legal order will require the more extensive engagement of multilateral institutions, as well as norms and mechanisms securing full observance. Only the United Nations system can ensure all of those.

In order to improve its effectiveness, we need to reform the Organization along the way, respect agreed norms and honour our commitments in good faith. We recall that a return to a Hobbesian world is always possible and that some people continue actively to bring it about. That is why Poland felt sorely tried under the effects of the twentieth-century dramas. However, Poland is committed to promoting respect for the principles, integrity and full implementation of the output of our Organization. Such action will ensure that the tasks we propose will be carried out effectively and the United Nations will meet the expectations we set out at its very beginning and continue to promote today.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Poland for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bronislaw Komorowski, President of the Republic of Poland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mohamed Morsy, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

Mr. Mohamed Morsy, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Morsy, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Morsy (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Mr. Vuk Jeremić and his friendly country on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its current session. I wish him every success in his task.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the former President of the General Assembly, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, and the brotherly State of Qatar for their outstanding stewardship of the previous session. I would also like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for striving tirelessly to preserve the role of the Organization and enhance its effectiveness. I assure him of Egypt's support in all efforts extended for that purpose.

My presence here today to address the General Assembly has multiple significance. I am the first Egyptian civilian President elected democratically and freely, following a great peaceful revolution hailed by the entire world. The revolution enjoyed genuine legitimacy thanks to the efforts and will of all Egyptians, inside and outside of Egypt, and by the grace of God. Today, every Egyptian shares a sense of self-confidence that allows each of them to claim a higher moral and cultural ground.

We have taken several effective steps on the road towards establishing the modern State aspired to by all Egyptians — one that is in tune with the present, based on the rule of law, democracy and respect for human rights, a constitutional State that will not compromise the values firmly embedded in the souls of all Egyptians, a State that seeks justice, truth, freedom, dignity and social justice.

The Egyptian revolution that was founded on the legitimacy that I represent before the Assembly today was not the product of a fleeting moment, or a brief uprising. Nor was it the product of the winds of change of a certain spring or autumn. Rather, that revolution, and all the ones preceding it and following it in the region, were triggered by the long-term struggle of indigenous national movements seeking a life of pride and dignity for all citizens. It therefore reflects the wisdom of history and is a clear warning to those attempting to put their interests before those of their peoples.

We are therefore striving to realize a new vision of Egypt that will serve as a programme of action for the world and that will guide our cooperation with the international community in a spirit of equality and mutual respect through the promotion of non-intervention in the affairs of States and the implementation of international principles, agreements and instruments. Today we reiterate our commitment, particularly to the Charter of the United Nations, which Egypt took part in drafting.

From that perspective, we continue efforts to resolve problems and address their root causes, without relinquishing the principles of law or well-established values that, if compromised, could lead to grave international consequences if the rational and sincere among us choose not to pay heed.

The first issue that the global community must exert all efforts to resolve, on the basis of justice and dignity, is the Palestinian cause. Many decades have passed since the Palestinian people expressed their desire to regain their full rights and build their independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital. Despite the continued struggle of the people via all legitimate means to attain their rights, and despite the acceptance by their representatives of the resolutions adopted by the international community as a basis for resolving problems, this issue of international legitimacy has to date, unfortunately, remained without a resolution to achieve the hopes and aspirations of the Palestinian people. And the resolutions agreed on the issue remain far from implementation.

The fruits of dignity and freedom must not remain out of reach of the brotherly Palestinian people. It is shameful that the free world has accepted, without regard to the justifications provided, the continued denial, by a member of the international community, of the rights of a nation that, for decades, has longed for independence. It is also disgraceful that settlement activities have continued in the Palestinian territories, along with the delay in implementing decisions of international legitimacy.

Proceeding from the perspective of defending truth, freedom and dignity, and from my duty to support our Palestinian brothers and sisters, I place the international community face to face with its obligatory responsibilities requiring the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace, an end to all forms of occupation of Arab land and the implementation of relevant international resolutions. I call for immediate and significant measures to put an end to occupation, settlement activities and any alteration to the identity of occupied Jerusalem.

I call for peace that will establish a sovereign Palestinian State and achieve the security and stability long sought by the peoples of the region. On the same basis, I assure the Assembly of Egypt's full support of any course of action that Palestine decides to follow in the United Nations.

I call upon all Member States, just as they have supported the revolutions of the Arab peoples, to extend their support to the Palestinians and their endeavour to recover the full and legitimate rights of a people struggling to regain its freedom and establish an independent State of Palestine, based on the inalienable rights of the Palestinians.

We are determined to work to pursue all efforts of the Palestinian people, in support of them and side by side until they freely regain all rights for all segments and communities of the population.

From this rostrum and at this eminent gathering, I must address the issue that weighs heavily upon all of us, namely, the bloodshed and the human tragedy in Syria. The bloodshed must be halted immediately. That is our first concern. The blood being shed in the land of beloved Syria is far too valuable to continue to lose day and night. The brotherly Syrian people, who are dear to the hearts of every Egyptian, deserve to hope for a future of freedom and dignity. That is the essence of the initiative that I proposed in the Holy City of Mecca during the recent month of Ramadan, and which I have reiterated on subsequent occasions. It aims to avoid the worst; to check the continued suffering of the Syrian people and the devolvement of the conflict into a full scale civil war — God forbid — with concomitant negative effects extending beyond Syria and its immediate neighbours.

Egypt, along with the three other countries involved in our initiative, has held meetings that manifested many areas of commonalities. We will continue to work to put an end to the suffering of the Syrian people and provide them with an opportunity to choose freely the regime that best represents them.

After the current regime comes to an end — the regime that is killing its own people day and night — the Syrian people will choose, by their own free will, a regime that represents them and that places Syria in its proper position among democratic countries contributing to the common march of the Arab people based on its solid, legitimate, regional and international role.

I would like to emphasize here that the initiative is open to all. It is not just the purview of its four starting parties, but is open to all who wish to positively contribute to resolving the Syrian crisis and suffering, that we are all responsible for.

All of us, the world over, must actively endeavour to put an end to the tragedy. It is the tragedy of the age, and our duty is to end it.

Egypt is committed to continuing its sincere efforts to put an end to the catastrophe in Syria under an Arab, regional and international framework that preserves the unity of that brotherly State. It would involve all factions of the Syrian people without ethnic, religious or gender discrimination and would spare Syria the danger of foreign military intervention, which we oppose. Egypt is also committed to supporting the mission of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, and to continuing the current efforts aimed at unifying the Syrian opposition and encouraging it to propose a comprehensive unified vision of an organized democratic transfer of power by measures that preserve the rights of all constituencies in Syria, and maintain their essential positions in the new Syria — like the new Egypt.

I cannot fail to reiterate Egypt's commitment to working with the other Arab countries to ensure that the Arab nation reclaims its rightful position in the world. That is an integral component of Egypt's vision of national security and of the larger homeland extending from the Arab Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean — an area that thrives with opportunities for cooperation and constructive engagement with the entire world.

Egypt also believes that the extremely valuable contribution of the Arab nation within the wider Islamic sphere is of vital necessity in promoting joint action within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Egypt will make every effort to ensure that the next OIC conference, to be held early next year in Egypt, will strengthen mutual understanding between Islamic countries and the rest of the world and set in motion the principles of the dialogue among civilizations, by eliminating the causes of misunderstandings used by fanatics on both sides to prove, wrongly, that differences among people are great and to achieve political goals completely unrelated to the noble ideals of religions, human values or ethics.

Today more than ever, our brothers and sisters in the Sudan need the Assembly's support. The Sudan is seeking to achieve stability and development and is working to build sound and ideal relations with South Sudan. I believe that the nascent State, together with the Sudan, is ready to become a centre of cooperation between the Arab world and African countries. The Sudan has made great sacrifices in its quest for peace and stability. It has committed itself to the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. It was also the first country to recognize the nascent State of South Sudan. But let me be frank: it has not received the support it deserves. It is now high time for international efforts to rally in support of the Sudan and to work on settling differences between the Sudan and its neighbour to the south in order to resolve all outstanding issues.

An early success of the brotherly Somali people during the difficult transitional phase was to elect His Excellency Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as President, which is a positive step towards unity and stability after a very difficult period. I call upon the United Nations to continue to support the Somali Government's efforts to fend off those seeking to hinder its efforts to achieve stability, reconstruct State institutions and realize the aspirations of the Somali people for a better future.

The principles of justice and right are linked to achieving security and stability in the world, particularly in the Middle East. Over many long years, some have wrongfully sought to maintain stability through oppression and tyranny. Some of us have, alas, applauded their bad deeds. But now that the peoples of the region have regained their freedom, they will neither tolerate, nor permit, being deprived of their rights, by either their own leaders or outside forces.

The will of the people, especially in our region, no longer accepts the continued non-accession of any country to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the non-application of the safeguards regime to that country's nuclear facilities, especially if such action is coupled with irresponsible policies or arbitrary threats. In that regard, the international community's acceptance of the principle of pre-emption or attempts to legitimize it represents a serious matter that must be firmly confronted to avoid any tendency to promote the law of the jungle.

Cognizant of the danger that the status quo represents to the security of our important region, with its natural resources and trade corridors, Egypt stresses the necessity of mobilizing international efforts to convene the special conference on declaring the Middle East a nuclear-weapon-free zone that is also free of other weapons of mass destruction, before the end of the current year, with the participation of all concerned parties, without exception.

I should like to say very clearly that the only solution is to eliminate all nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. There is no alternative. At the same time, we also emphasize the right of all countries of the region and of the world, including Egypt, of course, to the peaceful use of nuclear energy within the framework of the NPT, with a commitment to honour their obligations in that respect and provide the necessary guarantees to the countries of the region, so as to avoid any doubt surrounding their peaceful nuclear programmes.

In our view, the concepts of justice, truth and dignity form the basis of the framework for governing international relations.

A review of international relations would undoubtedly reveal the extent of the injustice that has been inflicted upon the African continent. I do not think it necessary to enumerate all the previous pledges that have been made in the Hall to boost development and economic growth in Africa through aid and investment. The world has a responsibility to support Africa's efforts beyond mere promises and good intentions; it must provide the assistance needed for African countries to recover the treasures that were stolen from them over successive eras, the last of which being the period when some thought that supporting unjust regimes would help to achieve a false stability that protected their interests, while those regimes merely spread corruption and allowed for wealth to be smuggled outside their countries.

I am aware that the desired goals can only be achieved through the active participation of the peoples of the continent and their assumption of their own responsibilities. That is something that we as Africans are ready and willing to undertake in our quest for a better future for our countries. Today, we as Africans have to create for our continent a new set of ambitious goals that would ensure that we are on the right track towards sustainable development, the fulfilment of our aspirations for a better future and the real participation of Africa in the international order. I assure the Assembly that Egypt will continue to support its brothers and sisters in Africa, and that it is ready to cooperate with any stakeholder or party in or outside the continent to raise living standards in Africa through the exchange of expertise and successful practices.

As we contemplate the current international order, we feel that there is a need to work diligently to repair it, based on principles that would renew its legitimacy and preserve its credibility. That is a legitimate demand of peoples and nations as they seek to participate in shaping a new world and a better future for their children.

Revitalizing the role of the General Assembly as a democratic forum that expresses the will of the international community and reforming the structure of a Security Council, which still reflects a bygone era, must remain our highest priorities and must be undertaken with due seriousness.

I would like to emphasize the need for the United Nations to give special attention to women's issues and youth issues. During the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Tehran, I proposed a new initiative to establish a United Nations body dedicated solely to youth issues, giving particular attention to education, training, employment and improving youth participation in political life. The aim is to build the capacity of future generations to achieve their aspirations.

Egypt would like to stress that the international system will not be fixed as long as we have double standards. We expect from others, as others expect from us, respect for our cultural specificities and religious points of reference. The world beyond our region should not seek to impose on us concepts or cultures that are unacceptable to us, nor should they politicize certain issues and use them as a pretext to intervene in our affairs.

What Muslims — and migrant Muslims — are experiencing in a number of regions worldwide in terms of discrimination, basic human rights violations and vicious campaigns against what they hold sacred, is unacceptable. The behaviour of some individuals in that regard is absolutely unacceptable. We reject the insults heaped upon the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad — peace be upon him — as unacceptable. We oppose those who hurl such insults. We will not allow anyone to insult the Prophet in word or in deed. It runs counter to the most basic principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Unfortunately, such practices have acquired a name today — Islamophobia.

We all have to work together. We must join hands in confronting regressive ideas that hinder cooperation among us. We must move together to confront extremism, discrimination and incitement to hatred of others on the basis of religion or race. The General Assembly and the Security Council have the primary responsibility for addressing a phenomenon that is starting to have clear implications for international peace and security.

The obscenities that I have referred to, which are part of a recent organized campaign against Islamic sanctities, are unacceptable and require that we take a firm stand. We have a responsibility at this international forum to look into how we can protect the world from instability and insecurity.

Egypt respects freedom of expression — a freedom of expression that is not used to incite hatred against anyone and that is not directed towards a specific religion or culture. We support a freedom of expression that addresses extremism and violence and does not deepen ignorance or disregard others. As we have said before, we firmly oppose the use of violence as a means of expressing objection to obscenity and indecency.

Before I conclude, I must say that the severity and recurrence of financial and economic crises must lead us to a review of the international economic decision-making processes that affect the fate of peoples who have not participated directly in those processes but yet are unfortunately the first to bear their negative impacts on growth, trade, the environment and the social fabric of society, as a result of unfair trade rules and practices and conditionalities imposed on the transfer of technology and access to necessary financing for development. We urgently need a new people-centred form of global economic governance that aims at consolidating cooperation between development partners on the basis of mutual benefit and interests.

I have laid out our vision, which is shared by the Egyptian people. I have also attempted to briefly outline Egypt's views on the main issues, which is to say the vision of Egyptian youth, children, women and men, Muslim and non-Muslim, on all important questions in the Middle East, Africa and the rest of the world. From that perspective, I am sure that the United Nations is capable of assuming its intended role of effectively addressing all global and regional issues and challenges through dialogue, understanding and joint cooperation, in accordance with the principles of international law.

Post-revolutionary Egypt will spare no effort to deal sincerely with all Members of the Organization. We will always remain in the forefront of international endeavours aimed at achieving freedom, justice, social justice and dignity for all peoples, as well as security and stability for all our countries.

I look forward with great optimism, and I see the peace that we call for prevailing all over the world — a peace based on justice and conferring on all their undiminished rights, a peace that does not discriminate between people for any reason. That peace will not come about until we all cooperate, until we realize that we are all equal and share many aspirations and ambitions. That is the peace whose message I bring to to the Assembly — a peace of right and justice, stability and development, interdependence of interests and benefits, love and mutual respect. I do not believe that achieving this will raise difficulties for any of us if we extend the hand of cooperation, sincere intention and righteous work. God is our witness. We are all hopeful that we will see a better future for the world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mohamed Morsy, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, President of the United Mexican States

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the United Mexican States.

Mr. Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, President of the United Mexican States, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, President of the United Mexican States, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Calderón Hinojosa (*spoke in Spanish*): By virtue of its historical conviction, Mexico has always been a strategic ally of the United Nations. As one of the founding Members of the United Nations, we fully share its fundamental precepts.

This is the last session of the General Assembly I will attend as President of Mexico. Over the past six years, my country has taken part in many different forums to pave the way for United Nations initiatives. We have endeavoured to make it the main body for dialogue, peace and security, and for the rule of law, including, in particular, the effective exercise of international law.

Today the world faces challenges that threaten the very existence and viability of humankind. The first of those is the current economic emergency and the urgent need to promote global trade and growth with strong job creation. That problem has plunged entire populations in crisis and prevented developing nations from overcoming setbacks with respect to poverty, ignorance and marginalization.

When Mexico became President of the Group of 20 (G-20) in 2012, our mission was clear: to reconcile the apparently competing interests of developing and developed nations. It is no secret that at the previous meeting of the G-20, in Cannes, we were unable to make as much progress as we would have liked towards adopting measures to advance the global economy. For that reason, the Mexican Government made it a priority to build a broader consensus. We brought as many countries as possible into the process, along with representatives of the widest possible range of sectors, including unions, entrepreneurs, civil society organizations and youth, and we took their proposals to the plenary meeting of the G-20.

We held many preparatory ministerial meetings over many months and managed to bring apparently divergent positions closer together. That work was critical in ensuring that the G-20 Summit in Los Cabos last June achieved significant progress. While it is true that months ahead of time there were doubts about the viability of the euro as the sole currency for many European countries, the meeting in Los Cabos solidified the Group's commitment not only to that currency as a monetary unit but also to financial, fiscal and political unity in the eurozone. The commitments of the international financial institutions were spelled out in greater detail and broadened, in particular those of the European institutions, but also those of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Among the most significant achievements agreed at the Los Cabos G-20 Summit, I should like to mention the long-term action plan that proposes to tackle the current economic situation as well as to move forward towards the full and lasting economic recovery that we all yearn for. It is also very important that we agreed to provide the greatest contribution to the resources of the IMF in the history of the organization. More than $450 trillion was committed, and is available to help developing or developed countries facing a critical financial situation as a result of the current economic crisis.

It is true that financial problems in some European countries persist. Those are problems that will take a long time to recover from. But, from our point of view, there is now more promise for a solution than there was before the G-20 meeting. The commitment on the part of the G-20 countries has been a valuable element, so much so that today the global economy is beginning to show more optimistic signs of medium-term recovery than we saw a little more than a year ago. That is why I believe that we are starting to see a turning point when it comes to economic prospects. We must all contribute to ensuring that the recovery in fact takes place through the implementation of the commitments undertaken. That should not keep us from undertaking further efforts. On the contrary, we must step up our efforts in order to overcome, once and for all, the global crisis and promote development in our societies.

I would like to underscore that the Los Cabos Summit did not look only at the international crisis, and certainly not only at Europe. We also dealt with various pressing and important topics. We wanted to ensure that countries would recover growth through a sustainable approach. We included several other items of extreme importance on the agenda, including green growth — to which I will refer later — food security for our peoples and financial inclusion for the poorest.

In that regard, approximately 3 billion adults in the world do not have access to financial services. That is a clear obstacle to justice, but also to the efficiency and growth of our economies. That is why we in Mexico have expanded people's access to financial services. Today, banks offer simplified requirements for opening accounts. We are establishing a completely new bank that functions through the use of cell phones, which 80 per cent of the population own. We are offering, through bank intermediaries, financial services in the most remote places.

Not only has my Government been introducing programmes to promote justice and fight poverty, but the majority of the support that we give to the poorest sectors of the population today is done through a financial inclusion effort. Our Opportunities Programme is an innovative financial transaction programme for 6.5 million families, or over a quarter of the total population of Mexico, including the poorest families. They receive monthly economic support to purchase food and cover basic needs as long as mothers take their children to schools and to the doctor, as that is one of the best ways of structurally breaking the cycle of poverty. That support is delivered through debit cards linked to an individual bank account, which those 6.5 million poor families have perhaps never had access to before.

Food security was another other topic that we explored at the G-20 Summit. The increase in food prices around the world largely explains why, besides the political reasons that might exist in any nation, people in North Africa and many other parts of the world have, from 2010 to the present time, taken to the streets. If the poorest families devote half of their income to buying food and the price of that food increases by 10 or 20 per cent, we are talking about a net global impoverishment that is higher than those percentages. We are saying that one of the most tragic problems in the fight against poverty is preventing such enormous rises in global food prices.

Concretely, we achieved agreements to promote greater investment in technology and greater public and private investment in agriculture, so that, with the same resources and the same land and water, we can produce more and better food globally. Mexico took an active part in the green revolution at the beginning of the 1970s. Now we need another green revolution to produce food. Mexico wants to be an active participant in that transformation of technology, public policy and financial cooperation that could provide food to the poorest people in the world. At the G-20 Summit, we showed that it is possible to find a solution to urgent and topical problems, as well as to long-term problems.

The second challenge of the four I would like to mention today has to do with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which the United Nations so wisely established. It is very clear that they encapsulate the yearnings of all of our peoples for a harmonious, humane and sustainable development. My country, despite the unexpected rise in global food prices and the worst global economic crisis in living memory, has made real progress in reaching the Goals. I would like to stress that Mexico is close to achieving the MDGs. Three years from the deadline, we have achieved one of the greatest aspirations of any nation, whether developed or developing, namely, universal health coverage. What does that mean? It means that today in Mexico we have doctors, medicine, treatment and hospitals for every Mexican man or woman who requires it. That will allow us to comply with the commitments taken on in the area of reducing mother and child mortality. We are also energetically tackling such problems as HIV/AIDS. In Mexico, we provide free medical care and free antiretroviral drugs to all HIV/AIDS patients, thereby contributing to overcoming that serious global challenge.

Furthermore, not only have we achieved universal health coverage, but we have also provided universal coverage when it comes to primary education. Today, every boy and girl of school age — between 5 and 13 years of age — has a place in a free public school. We have also closed the gap between men and women so that they participate equally in basic education at almost every level.

We have achieved important progress. We have built over 1,200 new hospitals and clinics in six years and established 140 universities. Those are new free public universities, where every year we train 113,000 engineers who are, besides enhancing their earning power, also revolutionizing the competitiveness of Mexican industry.

We have also achieved progress beyond the agreed goals in terms of access to drinking water, information technologies and decent housing. Almost 650,000 mortgage credits for as many houses are provided every year in our country, especially to workers who earn less than $20 a day. All of those achievements put us on track to comply with one of the MDGs within the time frame established.

Globally, Mexico is aware of the fact that progress is uneven, but that should not be a reason to abandon our efforts. We must reinforce the progress we have made and ensure that it continues.

That is why Mexico would suggest that we move towards a second generation of MDGs that would be universal, measurable and adapted to distinct national realities in areas such as gender equity, environmental protection, green growth, education, food, access to water and international democratic governance. That should be a central part of the 2015 development agenda.

The third challenge is that of climate change. Its impact could be irreversible, both for societies and in terms of national resources. I know that, in all of the countries represented here, there is currently either an unprecedented drought or unprecedented flooding. Here in Manhattan, less than two years ago, there was a hurricane on Fifth Avenue for the first time in history. There were also tornadoes in Maine and Massachusetts. Climate change is affecting all nations. This is a challenge that threatens to overwhelm humankind. If we do not tackle it today, the cost for each country to deal with its consequences will be significantly greater.

Mexico is seeking to engage all of its capacities in prompting a sense of responsibility when it comes to the fight against global warming. That is why we have set up a special unilateral programme to fight it. We are committed to reducing our yearly carbon dioxide emissions by 50 million tons for this year. We made that commitment in 2008, and we are meeting it: by the end of the year we will have reached our goal.

We are also the first country to deliver a national message in the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We have delivered four messages to date, and today I will deliver Mexico's fifth such message in that regard. I will report on how we have complied with our commitments, as well as illustrate how we have managed to uncouple Mexico's economic growth from its greenhouse-gas emissions. In the past two decades, our emissions have increased at a rate that is 40 per cent lower than our economic growth rate.

We are doing this because to challenge a false notion that we have heard expressed here at the United Nations and in every economic forum around the world. The idea seems to be that we either grow or we tackle climate change, we either put an end to poverty or we put an end to global warming. It would seem that we cannot do both at the same time, but I am here to say that we can. I would even say that we should. We have to overcome the false dichotomy that exists between protecting the environment and promoting economic growth, and between fighting poverty and fighting climate change.

In Mexico, we are doing both at the same time. Through ProÁrbol, for instance, which is a programme that pays for environmental services, and is perhaps the largest in the world to do so, we are paying poor and indigenous communities who live in forests and jungles for the water that they give us and for the oxygen that we breathe. We are paying them not to cut down trees, to restore their water basins so that those environmental services will remain for us. With this programme, as we take care of our forests, we are also providing income to the poorest communities, who have never had income before. In the six years of the programme, we have planted 1.3 billion trees in our country. I recall a United Nations programme five years ago that aimed at planting 1 billion trees around the world. We took part in that programme enthusiastically. We have planted 1.3 billion trees in six years and designated 3.5 million hectares as protected natural areas.

A promising result of that effort is that, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization, Mexico has reduced its net deforestation rate from 350,000 hectares annually in the 1990s to 150,000 between 2005 and 2010. I am sure that we will have reduced it further between 2010 and 2012. Our hope is that not only will we achieve a rate of zero this decade, but that we will reverse deforestation around the world.

With respect to that challenge, working with the United Nations, we were pleased to organize the sixteenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 16) in Cancún, Mexico. Against all predictions, COP 16 was a rather successful meeting. We reached a first ever agreement on implementing an emissions reduction scheme for deforestation and degradation, called REDD-plus, which will enable developing countries to contribute to reducing emissions while preserving and augmenting forests and jungles.

The greatest riches that poor countries have are their natural capital, and developing countries do not pollute with industries that they do not have. The greatest riches are forests and jungles, and carbon emissions come from deforestation. If developing countries are given the support they need to preserve forests and jungles, we will be contributing to reducing carbon emissions and helping to raise the income of those communities. We agreed on that in Cancún at COP 16.

That success also points to a possibility that was first raised in the context of the fight against global warming. We have managed to overcome the differences between developed and developing countries. We have managed to set aside the perverse game of blaming each other by saying either that the rich are to blame because they are the ones polluting, or that the poor are to blame because they are the ones emitting greenhouse gases. In this we are all responsible, and we all have to find the solution. We are all responsible for the planet that we share, which does not recognize our borders when it comes to the environment.

That is why the principle of common but differentiated responsibility enabled us to reach reasonable agreements in Cancún. We set up the Green Fund to fight climate change, as proposed by Mexico. We established by consensus the clearly set threshold of an increase of no more than 2 degrees in the planet's temperature in the long term, a commitment to reduce emissions, an institutional framework for the adaptation to climate change and mechanisms for the financing and transfer of technology. Those achievements revived multilateralism on the issue of climate change and were folowed by the successful Climate Change Conference held in Durban in 2011.

The fourth challenge — and I would like the Assembly's special attention as I address this problem, which is responsible for more violent deaths around the world than any other — is a problem that is costing thousands of young people their lives, in particular in our beloved region of Latin America and the Caribbean. I am talking about transnational organized crime, which is cutting short the lives of thousands of young people and constitutes one of the most serious global threats of our time. Criminal organizations form operational networks covering major illicit flows not only of drugs but also of arms, money and, unacceptably, of people. They use violence to control their markets, supply and clients and to seize the income of the honest citizens of the places they dominate. In that way, they seek to control territories and co-opt Governments. They challenge the strength of States themselves and take advantage of institutional weakness or bare-faced corruption to establish power and impunity. They become entrenched in communities and control everything they can. They claim money from honest people for their work. They collect quotas from businesses and working people and control other criminal activities such as extortion, theft and kidnapping.

Organized crime is one of the leading causes of death today. It is a leading engine of violence, which the United Nations has an obligation to fight. It is one of the greatest threats facing democracy in the twenty-first century.

Mexico has suffered the consequences of this scourge, which, lamentably, has resulted from of years of inaction in the face of the unbridled expansion of such criminal activity. That is why protecting the families and people of Mexico from criminality has been, for my Government, not only a constitutional legal imperative but an absolute ethical and political one as well. We have fought robustly, decisively and courageously against that unacceptable threat to our peoples. We have done that based on our belief that our principal duty as a Government is to protect families.

At the same time, we have promoted a truly historic transformation of the institutions charged with enforcing the law by developing new and improved police and judicial capacities in the fight for security. We require new and better capabilities that can cope with the task of defending freedom and legality. However, we regret that our efforts are not being matched in all the countries where they are needed. I would like to explicitly express my regret before the Assembly that the diplomatic conference that took place here in July failed to reach an agreement on the adoption of an arms trade treaty. Such a treaty would have laid the groundwork for controlling the irresponsible sale of powerful weapons to transnational organized criminal groups.

Over the past six years, my Government has decommissioned more than 150,000 weapons that had been in the hands of criminals. That is why Mexico advocated for a treaty that would limit or ban, or at least regulate, the transfer of conventional weapons, because we know there is a risk — we know that that happens — that those weapons do not end up in the hands of good citizens who want to defend themselves; they end up in the hands of criminals. That is why such a business exists, namely, to commit horrible and unprecedented violations of international law against peoples.

The trafficking of arms is only one aspect of that very complex problem. Today, we have to acknowledge an undeniable truth: the illegal drug consumption in many developed countries is killing thousands of young people in producing and transiting countries. It fuels violence that our peoples do not deserve. Drug-consuming countries have not made progress — or at least not significantly — in reducing drug consumption. There is much work to be done in that regard, both in terms of reducing demand and in preventing addiction. We need to step up our efforts to deal with this public health problem through preventive policies, fighting addiction and media and information campaigns that would make young people around the world understand that drug addiction is the slavery of the twenty-first century. It is a heavy chain choking our young people to death.

In addition, we must also bear in mind the origins of the greatest power of criminal organizations. Where does it come from? It comes from the billions of dollars of economic resources financing them, which in turn flow from the drug-consuming countries. If we do not stop that avalanche of funds from consumers, organized crime will continue to undermine peace and challenge whole societies and Governments.

That is why here, in this pre-eminent global forum, I would like to say with the utmost clarity that the time has come for consuming countries to ask themselves, honestly and sincerely, whether they have the will and the ability to reduce drug consumption significantly and substantially. Otherwise, if they cannot reduce that consumption, they must urgently take decisive steps at least to reduce the extraordinry flows of money that end up in the hands of criminal organizations.

I know that to date the approach taken has been well intentioned, seeking to keep drugs out of the hands of young people by pursuing the battle against drug trafficking via legal means. But there is a fundamental problem with that approach: it fuels the black market. The enormous earnings that have been made possible through that market owing to the prohibition have in turn further fuelled greater ambitions among criminals and further increased the massive flow of resources towards their organizations. That has allowed them to create powerful networks and given them an almost unlimited ability to corrupt. They are able to buy entire Governments and entire police forces, leaving societies unarmed and families defenceless, especially in the poorest countries.

While it is clear that powerful countries have powerful judicial authorities and police forces, what about the poorest countries in our continents? I am talking about our countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. But what will happen in Africa or Asia, or in the very many nations that do not have the economic power to tackle such criminals?

Let us grasp once and for all that the ever-growing demand for drugs gives the criminals an economic power that in some cases translates to political power sufficient to bend the will of the authorities to their own. I want to stress that all that money builds in them such overweening confidence that they abandon all scruples and commit the worst atrocities and acts of cruelty that humankind has ever seen. Drug users' money causes the deaths of many thousands of young people in Latin America and the Caribbean as a consequence of drug trade violence. The countries that suffer most acutely the devastating effects of the situation are countries like ours that lie between the production zones in the Andes and the largest consumption market, the United States: Colombia, Venezuela, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, and, in the Caribbean, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and all other countries in that path.

I would like to report that in December of last year the heads of State and Government of Central America and of Mexico, Colombia and Chile met for what we called the Tuxtla cooperation mechanism and issued a very important statement, the Mérida Declaration. It proclaims the urgent need to make a tangible reduction in demand for illegal drugs in consumer nations. We also said that if that is impossible the authorities of those countries have the moral obligation to explore every possible means to eliminate the astronomical financial gains of criminals, including regulatory or market options.

Some months later we convened representatives of all the countries of the hemisphere for the sixth Summit of the Americas in Cartagena, Colombia, where several Latin American leaders reiterated our concern, and countries from Canada to Chile reached an agreement to give a mandate to the Organization of American States to make a scientific analysis of all possible options to battle the scourge more effectively. We also agreed unanimously to establish a hemisphere-wide plan against transnational organized crime to foster real-time cooperation among all the hemisphere's law enforcement agencies.

Today I formally propose that the United Nations commit to making an in-depth assessment of the scale and limits of the current prohibitionist approach to drugs. That does not mean giving up the fight or ceding one inch to criminal organizations. We will never do that. But what it does mean is that countries must take responsibility, both the common responsibilities we all share and differentiated responsibilities, in accordance with each nation's capacities..

In any case, irrespective of the regulatory framework, all nations, especially emerging ones like Mexico, must implement a coherent policy, with a three-pronged approach. The first obligation is to fight crime, not to run away from it and not to allow criminals to establish territories as if they were a State. The second is to strengthen laws and law enforcement agencies and institutions. In particular, we must purge and strengthen police forces, public prosecutors, Government ministers and judicial authorities. The third and most important is to restore the social fabric. We must increase opportunities for young people in the areas of education, health, employment and leisure. We must do it through universities, music groups, soccer teams and clinics to prevent and treat drug addiction. We must establish active and massive prevention and treatment policies for young people, including teenagers.

We are already doing that in Mexico. The three-pronged approach is crucial for any democratic State, regardless of its political philosophy. Every State must fight crime, improve law enforcement institutions and create opportunities.

Today I call upon all States Members of the United Nations to assume that responsibility, which so far has not measured up to the magnitude of the problem of organized crime, which, I repeat, is the main cause of violent death in the world. That is something the United Nations must look at. If the developed countries that consume ton upon ton of drugs on a daily basis cannot or do not want to reduce drug consumption, then at least they should stem the flow of money they are sending to criminals and stop the exorbitant flow of money whereby users finance the deaths of thousands of young people. If they cannot do so, I emphasize that this is the time to explore different alternatives to reduce consumption.

Now is the time for the United Nations not only to take part in such an analysis but to lead in earnest a far-reaching international discussion, in order to take stock of the scale and limits of the current prohibitionist approach and to assess the brutal, unacceptable violence generated by the production, distribution, trafficking in and use of drugs. It is painful to say this, but the drug trade has made Latin America and the Caribbean the most violent region in the world. That assessment must be done with lucidity, academic rigour and global responsibility. Taking a world perspective, we must explore alternatives, specifically regulatory or market alternatives, to see what are and what are not real options that would allow all nations, working together, to put an end to the scourge that claims tens of thousands of lives in our region.

As the United Nations considers and finds solutions to global problems that threaten the integrity, health and lives of millions around the world, as it deals with famine, starvation in the Horn of Africa, epidemics such as the H1N1 virus in Mexico, and as it tackles climate change, so it must also take action to stop the wave of death and suffering with which the drug trade blights the lives of our people. I respectfully urge and exhort the United Nations not only to take part in but to lead a discussion, devoid of prejudgments, that addresses the scale of the twenty-first century challenge, encouraging all of us to seek new and effective approaches to solving this dire problem.

My tenure will end in a few months. I am proud that Mexico can now count on an economy that is solid, increasingly competitive and able to generate 700,000 new formal jobs annually. I can say with satisfaction that today Mexico is a stronger, more fair and more prosperous country, as our indices of human development for education, health, housing and employment show.

I would also like to say that beyond tackling the four challenges I referred to earlier, as a world community we should strengthen the United Nations from the inside so that it is equipped to meet global challenges. The initial task in that area is realistic, democratic reform of the Security Council to make it more representative and maintain its capacity for action by improving its working methods and the accountability of its members.

Mexico also welcomes the fact that the President proposed "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means" as the main theme for this session. It is a crucial subject for civilized coexistence and cooperation. As a country, Mexico is committed to cooperation and the settlement of disputes. We are very concerned, as we know the Assembly is also, about the weakness and, at times, the inertia of the Organization in the face of flagrant violations of international law. The grave situation in Syria, for example, is a danger to world peace and an indignity for all of us.

We condemn unreservedly the Damascus regime's repression and the violence it has inflicted on the civilian population, which has lead to a refugee crisis in neighbouring countries. The paralysis of the Security Council in the face of such crises must drive us to renew our political will to change the Organization. Just as we have transformed and embellished the United Nations building and removed the asbestos residue that we lived with for so many years, so it is important that we renovate the Organization in order to bring it in line with the demands of the twenty-first century.

We also condemn the premeditated terrorist attack on the United States Consulate in Benghazi and the assassination of the United States Ambassador and several members of his staff in Libya.

I reiterate that Mexico will fully comply with the Millennium Development Goals established by this great Organization. That is evident in our human development indices for education, health, housing, employment and social security. In the area of security, we have steadfastly fought criminal groups, updated our laws and thoroughly restructured our institutions. At the same time, we have continued to consolidate a democratic culture and respect for human rights. In Mexico today we have enacted reform whereby any human right recognized in any international treaty signed by Mexico also becomes internal law for Mexican courts.

Mr. Charles (Trinidad and Tobago), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I am proud to leave a Mexico that has close relations of friendship and cooperation with every nation; a Mexico that is an active participant in building a world of peace, justice, security and development. We want freedom for men and women; justice and respect for human rights in our societies; an environment that we respect and that will allow our beloved planet Earth to live forever; and democracy, without which there is no freedom or development. And, of course, we seek and desire peace on Earth, goodwill to men, and peace to all those in this Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United Mexican States for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, President of the United Mexican States, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by the Right Honourable Mr. David Cameron, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mr. David Cameron, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Right Honourable Mr. David Cameron, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Cameron (United Kingdom): I am proud that this year Britain welcomed the world to the Olympic and Paralympic games and put on a great display, showing that while we may have only the twenty-second-largest population in the world, we can roll out one of its warmest welcomes.

I am honoured, too, that in the coming year I have been asked to co-chair the high-level panel designed to help us build on one of the greatest achievements of the United Nations, the Millennium Development Goals. Britain takes that work very seriously. I am convinced that we need to focus more than ever on the building blocks that take countries and people from poverty to prosperity. By those building blocks I mean the absence of conflict and corruption and the presence of property rights and the rule of law. We should never forget that for many in the world the closest relative of poverty is injustice. Development has never been just about aid or money, but I am proud that Britain is a country that keeps its promises to the poorest in our world.

A year ago I stood here and argued that the Arab Spring represented an unprecedented opportunity for advancing peace, prosperity and security. One year on, some believe that the Arab Spring is in danger of becoming an Arab winter. They point to the riots on the streets, to Syria's descent into a bloody civil war, to frustration at the lack of economic progress and to the emergence of newly elected Islamist-led Governments across the region.

But I believe those people are in danger of drawing the wrong conclusion. Today is not the time to turn back, but to keep the faith and to redouble our support for open societies and for people's demands for a job and a voice. Yes, the path is challenging. But democracy is not, and never has been, simply about holding an election. It is not one person, one vote, once. Democracy is about establishing the building blocks of true democracy: the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law, with the majority prepared to defend the rights of the minority; the freedom of the media; a proper place for the army in society; and the development of effective State institutions, political parties and a wider civil society.

I am not so naive as to believe that democracy alone has some magical healing power. I am a liberal Conservative, not a neo-conservative. I respect each country's different histories and traditions. I welcome the steps taken in countries where reform is happening with the consent of the people. I know that every country takes its own path, and that progress will sometimes be slow. Some countries have achieved stability and success based on tradition and consent. Others have endured decades in which the institutions of civil society were deliberately destroyed, political parties banned, free media abolished and the rule of law twisted for the benefit of the few. We cannot expect the damage of decades to be put right in a matter of months. But the drive for opportunity, justice and the rule of law and the hunger for a job and a voice are not responsible for the problems in the region. In fact, quite the opposite: the building blocks of democracy, fair economies and open societies are part of the solution, not part of the problem. We in the United Nations must step up our efforts to support the people of those countries as they build their own democratic future.

Let me take the key arguments in turn. First, there are those who say there has been too little progress, that the Arab Spring has produced few tangible improvements in people's lives. That is not right. Look at Libya since the fall of Al-Qadhafi. We have seen elections to create a new Congress, and now plans to integrate armed groups into the national police and army. None of that is to ignore the huge and sobering challenges that remain.

The murder of Ambassador Chris Stevens was a despicable act of terrorism. But the right response is to finish the work that Chris Stevens gave his life to. That is what the vast majority of Libyans want, too, as we saw so inspiringly in Benghazi last weekend, when they took to the streets in the thousands, refusing to allow extremists to hijack their chance for democracy.

The Arab Spring has also brought progress in Egypt, where the democratically elected President has asserted civilian control over the military; in Yemen and Tunisia, where elections have brought new Governments to power; and in Morocco, where there is a new Constitution and a Prime Minister appointed on the basis of a popular vote for the first time. Even further afield, Somalia has also taken the first vital step forward by electing a new President. So there has been progress. None of it would have come about without people standing up last year and demanding change, or without the United Nations having the courage to respond to those crises.

Secondly, there is the argument that the removal of dictators has somehow started to unleash a new wave of violence, extremism and instability. Some argue that in a volatile region, only an authoritarian strong man can maintain stability and security. Or even, some argue, that recent events prove that democracy in the Middle East brings terrorism, not security, and sectarian conflict, not peace. Again, I believe we should reject that argument.

I have no illusions about the danger that political transition can be exploited by violent extremists. I understand the importance of protecting people and defending national security. Britain is determined to work with our allies to do that. But democracy and open societies are not the problem. The fact is that, for decades, too many were prepared to tolerate dictators like Al-Qadhafi and Al-Assad on the basis that they would keep their people safe at home and promote stability in the region and the wider world. In fact, neither was true. Not only were theose dictators repressing their people, ruling by control not by consent, plundering the national wealth, and denying people their basic rights and freedoms, they were funding terrorism overseas as well. Brutal dictatorships made the region more dangerous not less; more dangerous because those regimes dealt with frustration at home by whipping up anger against their neighbours, against the West, against Israel; and more dangerous, too, because people denied a job and a voice were given no alternative but a dead-end choice between dictatorship and extremism.

What was heartening about the events of Tahrir Square was that the Egyptian people found their voice and rejected that false choice. They withheld their consent from a Government that had lost all legitimacy, and they chose instead the road to a more open and fair society. The road is not easy, but it is the right one. I believe it will make countries safer in the end.

Next, there are those who say that, whatever may have been achieved elsewhere, in Syria the Arab Spring has unleashed a vortex of sectarian violence and hatred with the potential to destroy the whole region. Syria does present some profound challenges. But those who look at Syria today and blame the Arab Spring have got it the wrong way round. We cannot blame the people for the behaviour of a brutal dictator. The responsibility lies with the brutal dictator himself.

Al-Assad is today inflaming Syria's sectarian tensions, just as his father did as far back as the slaughter in Hama 30 years ago. And not only in Syria; Al-Assad has colluded with those in Iran who are set on dragging the region into wider conflict. The only way out of Syria's nightmare is to move forward towards political transition and not to give up the cause of freedom. The future for Syria is a future without Al-Assad. It has to be based on mutual consent, as was clearly agreed in the International Conference on Syria held in Geneva in June. If anyone was in any doubt about the horrors that Al-Assad has inflicted on his people, just look at the evidence published this week by Save the Children: schools used as torture centres, children used for target practice. A 16-year-old Syrian called Wael who was detained in a police station in Daraa said: "I have seen children slaughtered. No, I do not think I will ever be OK again...If there was even 1 per cent of humanity in the world, this would not happen".

The blood of those young children is a terrible stain on the reputation of the United Nations. In particular, it is a stain on those who have failed to stand up to these atrocities and those who in some cases aided and abetted Al-Assad's regime of terror. If the United Nations Charter is to have any value in the twenty-first century, we must now join together to support a rapid political transition. At the same time, no one of conscience can turn a deaf ear to the voices of suffering. Security Council members have a particular responsibility to support the United Nations appeal for Syria. Britain, already the third biggest donor, is today announcing a further $12 million in humanitarian support, including new support for UNICEF's work to help Syrian children. We look to our international partners to do more as well.

Of course, the Arab Spring has not removed overnight the profound economic challenges that these countries face. Too many countries face falling investment, rising food prices and bigger trade deficits. But it is completely wrong to suggest that the Arab Spring has somehow created those economic problems. It is a challenging time for the world economy as a whole. There was never going to be an economic transformation overnight, not least because far from being successful open-market-based economies, many of these countries were beset by vested interests and corruption, with unaccountable institutions. That has, one might say, created a double problem. Not just fragile economies, but worse, people were told they had experienced free enterprise and open markets when they had experienced nothing of the sort.

So we must help these countries unwind the legacy of endemic corruption, military expenditure they cannot afford, natural resources unfairly exploited; in short, the mass kleptocracy that they suffered under for too long.

While I am on the subject of stolen assets, we also have a responsibility to help these countries get back the stolen assets that are rightfully theirs, just as we have returned billions of dollars of assets to Libya. It is simply not good enough that the Egyptian people continue to be denied those assets long after Mubarak has gone.

Today, I am announcing a new British task force to work with the Egyptian Government to gather evidence, trace assets, work to change European Union law and pursue the legal cases that will return the stolen money to its rightful owners, the Egyptian people.

Finally, perhaps most challenging of all for Western countries like mine, is the argument that elections have simply opened the door to Islamist parties whose values are incompatible with truly open societies. My response to this is clear. We should respect the outcome of elections. But we should not compromise on our definition of what makes an open society. We should judge Islamists by what they do.

The test is this. Will they entrust the rights of citizenship to fellow countrymen and countrywomen who do not share their specific political or religious views? Do they accept that, unlike the dictators they replaced, they should never pervert the democratic process to hold onto power if they lose the consent of the people they serve? Will they live up to their commitments to protect the rule of law for all citizens, to defend the rights of Christians and minorities and to allow women a full role in society, in the economy and in politics? The truth is this: we cannot build strong economies, we cannot build open societies and we cannot have inclusive political systems if we lock out women. The eyes of the world today may be on the brothers, but the future is as much in the hands of their mothers, their sisters and their daughters.

Holding Islamists to account must also mean that if they attempt to undermine the stability of other countries, encourage terrorism instead of peace or promote conflict instead of partnership, we will oppose them. That is why Iran will continue to face the full force of sanctions and scrutiny from the United Nations until it gives up its ambitions to spread a nuclear shadow over the world. It is also why we should not waver from our insistence that Hamas give up violence. Hamas must not be allowed to dictate the way forward. Palestinians should have the chance to fulfil the same aspirations for a job and a voice as others in the region, and we support their right to have a State and a home. And Israelis should be able to fulfil their own aspirations to live in peace and security with their neighbours.

Of course there are challenges in working with Governments that have different views and cultural traditions. But there is a fundamental difference between Islam and extremism. Islam is a great religion observed peacefully and devoutly by more than 1 billion people. Islamist extremism is a warped political ideology supported by a minority that seeks to hijack that great religion, to gain respectability for its violent objectives. It is vital that we make that distinction.

In Turkey, we see a Government with roots in Islamic values but with democratic politics, an open economy and a responsible attitude to supporting change in Libya, Syria and elsewhere in the region. I profoundly believe the same path is open to Egypt, Tunisia and their neighbours. We must help them take it. Democracy and Islam can flourish alongside one another. Let us judge Governments not by their religion, but by how they act and what they do. Let us engage with the new democratic Governments in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya so their success can strengthen democracy, not undermine it.

There is no doubt that we are in the midst of profound change and that many uncertainties lie ahead. But the building blocks of democracy, fair economies and open societies are part of the solution, not the problem. Indeed, nothing in the last year has changed my fundamental conviction. The Arab Spring represents a precious opportunity for people to realize their aspirations for a job, a voice and a stake in their future. We in the United Nations must do everything we can to support them.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for the statement he has just made.

Mr. David Cameron, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Yoshihiko Noda, Prime Minister of Japan

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Japan.

Mr. Yoshihiko Noda, Prime Minister of Japan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Yoshihiko Noda, Prime Minister of Japan, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Noda (Japan) (*spoke in Japanese; English text provided by the delegation*): First, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Al-Nasser for his dedication during his one-year tenure as President of the General Assembly, as well as to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his assumption of the presidency of the Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I would also like to pay my deep respect to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his leadership.

One year ago, I started my speech on this rostrum by conveying our outpouring of appreciation to the world (see A/66/PV.19). It has been a year and a half since the Great East Japan Earthquake in March 2011. The people in the affected areas are making strenuous efforts, with an unyielding spirit, to revive their hometowns. In order to respond to generous support from all over the world, we, the Japanese, vowed before the souls of the victims to hand the lessons learned from the disaster down to succeeding generations beyond our national borders.

Japan will continue to share those lessons learned with the world in order to build societies resilient to natural disasters and to make concrete contributions to nuclear safety. The Fukushima Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety, which is scheduled for the end of this year, and is co-sponsored by the International Atomic Energy Agency and the third World Conference on Disaster Reduction, which Japan plans to host in three years, will also provide meaningful opportunities to share those lessons.

The warning from nature brought on by the unprecedented earthquake and massive tsunami posed a more fundamental question as to how we should sustain our civilization. From the moment of birth, human beings transform their own wisdom into the power to survive harsh natural environments. Despite advanced science and technology in modern civilization, however, the forces of nature have reminded us how weak human beings still are and that they have a fragile existence.

Threats that may endanger human existence lie not only in nature, but in advanced civilization itself. There are a number of examples of those threats, such as environmental degradation, terrorism and the proliferation of nuclear weapons. What is required for the human species to be able to keep its presence on Earth and continue to enjoy peace and prosperity? The answer is clear: humans must become wiser.

Humans have so far gained abundant knowledge. The revolution in information and communication technology unfolding in front of us is further building up human knowledge on a geometric scale and at an exponential speed. Human wisdom seems to have improved dramatically. However, is that really true? At the forefront of a long human history, we are living in a period of complicated and violent change. Tensions among nations have risen in many parts of the world, with more uncertain prospects for the future. The real test for our survival in this unprecedented period is not how much knowledge and information we have, but to learn the true value of the numerous pearls of wisdom we have accumulated.

One of the first such pearls of wisdom humans gained was the power to give adequate thought to not only the present, but also the future. It is also the power to imagine, beyond our own benefits, the benefits to future generations and the power to act on their behalf. Agricultural society, which prompted human beings to adopt a new vista, was made possible through the long-term perspective towards the future that human beings acquired when they waited for the harvest instead of thinking solely about immediate concerns.

Now is the time for us to exert our wisdom and build a sustainable future for the sake of succeeding generations. Many countries have built up massive fiscal deficits, therefore fiscal soundness is now a common challenge. If people living now do not overcome deficits by cutting spending and striving to increase revenues, future generations will be forced to repay the deficits.

That structure amounts to nothing but current generations exploiting future generations.

Democracy has been historically proven to be the best political system. However, we now face the enormous challenge of learning whether or not democracy can maintain fairness between generations across the globe. Under the system of parliamentary democracy, today's representatives serve people living now; there are no guarantees with respect to properly representing the interests of future generations. The current structure encourages politics that will burden silent future generations by passing today's problems onto them.

We are all responsible for the next generations. This generation must successfully meet the challenges before us, and today's political leaders must take responsibility now for tomorrow.

In order to protect sound democratic societies, now is the time to exert the power to think about the benefits for future generations. Over the past 20-odd years, Japan repeatedly procrastinated in policies and was considered a symbol of a country that delayed decisions. I pledged to change all that and staked my political life on implementing a comprehensive reform of our social security and taxation systems.

That reform is an ambitious package of policies developed to support Japan's social security system by maintaining a stable financial basis in the face of a rapidly aging population and by paving the way for fiscal rehabilitation. It is a comprehensive reform programme that pursues both economic growth and fiscal reconstruction. Japan is taking a firm step towards becoming a country that makes decisions without postponing difficult issues.

Another pearl of wisdom that humans acquired came from the possibility of seeing the Earth we live on. I recently had the opportunity to communicate directly with astronaut Akihiko Hoshide from my office while he was orbiting the Earth in the International Space Station. At the time of our phone linkup, a female elementary school student who was in the office with us posed a riddle to the astronaut: "The Earth has air and gravity, but space does not," she said. "What does space have that the Earth does not?" "The view of the Earth from outside it", the astronaut replied. That conversation expressed in simple terms what I want to say today.

Because we have attained the perspective of being able to see the Earth from outside, humankind as a whole shares the sublime mission of protecting the global environment. We must always return to that perspective, reaching beyond borders and advancing concrete measures to protect the Earth's environment, which is the a basis of human survival.

With the aim of protecting the global environment, a significant outcome for sustainable development was achieved at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in June 2012. Japan announced its green future initiatives, proposing that we explore sustainable growth in prosperity without the supply-demand crunch of natural resources and energy or damage to the global environment. Japan will implement a low carbon and sound material-cycle society and take the lead in solving the common energy challenges facing the world. To that end, we need more innovation in energy efficiency and renewable energy. In the light of the accident at Tokyo Electric Power Company's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station on 11 March 2011, and with the goal of achieving a society not dependent on nuclear power by the 2030s, the Government of Japan will mobilize all possible policy resources to show the world a model that supports a good balance between the shift towards green energy and economic growth. We will constantly review and re-examine our policies while carefully assessing the outlook for the future, including the international energy situation.

Being ever more conscious of our one precious Earth, we must direct our caring attention to the preciousness of each life breathing on the planet. The Japan-led resolution on human security (resolution 66/290), adopted on 10 September, can be a solid guide to visualizing development for the next generation from the perspective of all people, including women and young people. In the light of the common understanding of human security stipulated in that resolution, Japan is determined to contribute to worldwide efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and to work towards the establishment of the next development framework.

The ideal of human security needs particular emphasis with respect to the African continent, which steadily reveals greater development potential but still suffers from many challenges, such as poverty, natural disasters and conflicts. On the occasion of the fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development, to be held in Yokohama next June, Japan plans to discuss the measures the international community and Africa should adopt and implement.

We must completely and successfully meet the challenges that place our precious lives in danger.

Afghanistan is making significant efforts towards reconstruction after its prolonged experience of war. South Sudan is also moving forward in its nation-building efforts, and Myanmar has taken steady steps towards democracy and reconciliation. Japan will do its utmost to support and promote peacekeeping, peacebuilding and human security in each of those regions.

A third pearl of wisdom that humans obtained was the manner in which human beings settle disputes reasonably under rules. Human beings acquired language and nurtured wisdom, but, even in modern times, they have failed to resist the temptation to solve conflicts by force. Despite two world wars and the two calamities of atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, disarmament, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the prevention of terrorism remain key contemporary issues. The nuclear and missile issues in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran currently pose serious threats to the entire world. It is essential that all countries coordinate at the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency, including the implementation of Security Council resolutions urging both the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran to take concrete action. Japan, the only country that has experienced the horror of nuclear devastation in war, will continue to carry out its mission of seeking a world free of nuclear weapons.

The issue of the abductions by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea represents a violation of basic human rights. That makes it a universal issue and a matter of grave concern to the entire international community. Japan is committed to continuing its utmost efforts to achieve the return of all victims at the earliest possible date, through strengthened coordination with other Member States. Japan intends to maintain its efforts to comprehensively resolve outstanding issues of concern, settle the unfortunate past and normalize relations in accordance with the Japan-Democratic People's Republic of Korea Pyongyang Declaration. Japan continues to urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to take positive steps.

Humans have done more than just act on their lust for the use of force. We have also developed the skill to solve conflicts calmly through reason, which we call the rule of law. Every State has a responsibility to safeguard peace, ensure the safety of its people and protect its territorial and maritime sovereignty. Japan will fulfil those responsibilities in accordance with international law. Meanwhile, as globalization proceeds, the challenges confronting the international community are growing increasingly complex, and relations between nations can easily become tense.

At this critical juncture, we must establish the rule of law as a basis for global peace, stability and prosperity. Because the rule of law is essential to preventing and resolving conflicts in a peaceful manner, and because it plays a critical role in the maintenance of stable and predictable societies, it must be further enhanced. Any attempt to impose a country's ideology or claim by unilateral use of force or by threat of the use of force is inconsistent with the fundamental spirit of the United Nations Charter and runs counter to human wisdom; it is thus absolutely unacceptable. It is important to try to further develop international law and ensure that it gets implemented more effectively. I strongly call for leaders to strengthen the rule of law so as to leave future generations with a more peaceful and stable international community.

We are currently witnessing the settlement of conflicts between nations on the basis of international law. A typical example is the dispute settlement process of the World Trade Organization, a mechanism that has made it possible for States to solve trade disputes with the common language of law, not by force, in a panel or appellate body.

Japan has always valued the rule of law and has contributed to strengthening it. Since joining the International Court of Justice, Japan has consistently recognized the jurisdiction of the Court as compulsory and has taken the lead in practicing the rule of law.

Japan is leading the world in its contributions of personnel and financing to international judicial institutions. In addition to having served at the International Court of Justice, Japanese judges have also served at the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia. Furthermore, Japan has provided the largest financial support of any country for the latter three institutions. Japan requests each country to kindly offer financial support to the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, which is facing a severe financial crisis at the moment.

Supporting the United Nations in promoting the rule of law continues to be a great challenge. Once again, I call for nations to work in cooperation with the United Nations to recognize the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice, as Japan did, and for non-member countries of the ICC and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to join at an early date.

There are still a number of territorial and maritime disputes in many parts of the world. It is the philosophy of the Charter of the United Nations and a principle shared by the international community as a whole that disputes should be settled in a peaceful manner on the basis of international law. In all circumstances, Japan is determined to comply with that principle and seek peaceful solutions based on international law. The world should pay greater attention to the role the international judicial institutions play in the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Although the Middle East and Africa are still in a tumultuous whirlwind, they are in fact moving in the direction of establishing democracy. Japan will continue to support efforts at democratization and reform of every country. Moreover, we cannot overlook the ongoing violence and suppression in Syria, or the serious violations of human rights with respect to the rule of law. Japan strongly condemns the massive attacks in Syria that have involved tens of thousands of innocent citizens, journalists and aid workers, including Ms. Mika Yamamoto, a Japanese journalist. Japan intends to put more pressure on the Government of Syria, together with the international community, and to extend humanitarian assistance to the people of Syria.

Let me emphasize that the international community must secure the protection of civilians and the safety of diplomats and workers of international organizations through the rule of law. Today, violence against that principle cannot be tolerated for any reason.

The concept of the rule of law is the foundation for a stable and reliable society, making the movement of peoples and goods more vibrant and serving as a basis of prosperity. I believe that the rule of law can provide important infrastructure for order and prosperity for a network of States centred in the Asia-Pacific region. Japan will vigorously contribute to rule-making efforts to expand trade and investment, build maritime order, including the safety of navigation, and create stability for prosperity.

The rules needed by the international community are not simply for solving individual problems. Orderly relations between nations or within international organizations require the rule of law, more specifically, enhanced global governance. Unless all nations fulfil their responsibilities in their respective capacities, we cannot overcome the various common challenges that the world is facing. I hope in particular that emerging countries will fulfil their responsibilities commensurate with their respective national powers.

As part of such efforts, it is important that we engage in thorough discussions on how the United Nations should develop in the future. We strongly support management reform at the United Nations. Furthermore, in order for the Security Council to be fully effective, it must be endowed with a legitimacy that reflects the realities of the world today. Japan is ready to take on greater responsibility in the international community. Now is the time to accelerate the stalled process on Security Council reform and to start genuine negotiations.

So far I have mentioned three pearls of wisdom necessary for human beings to live sustainable lives in the future, and I have tried to convey Japan's contribution in each. It is my belief that human beings will continue to adapt to a complex world and become wiser. I believe they will give adequate consideration to future generations and solve disputes calmly through reason based on rules generated from the perspective of looking at the Earth from the outside.

Let us take charge of our responsibilities for tomorrow together. The lofty task for us living now is to carry out politics while imagining the benefits for future generations and gather all our wisdom to set a course towards the survival of human beings.

I should like to conclude my remarks by pledging to the entire General Assembly that Japan will stand at the forefront of shaping the future of human history for peaceful and affluent societies.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Japan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Yoshihiko Noda, Prime Minister of Japan, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council.

Mr. Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, and inviting him to make a statement.

Mr. Van Rompuy (European Council) (*spoke in French*): The advance of democracy has taken place in successive waves since the United Nations was created. That advance has experienced a new acceleration, which we all can all welcome. Without underestimating the difficulties and problems encountered elsewhere, I am thinking especially of the positive developments in Myanmar and Somalia and of the young democracies throughout the world, such as Timor-Leste.

But it is, of course, the transformations under way in the Arab world that are foremost in my mind today.

(*spoke in English*)

When these historic changes swept through the Arab world, they stirred a mixture of deep emotions in those watching, both within the region and beyond. There was fear of bloodshed, regional instability and of a rise of extremism, and uncertainty about what was yet to come. But, overwhelmingly, the world looked on with solidarity, understanding and hope. We in Europe — geographically so close and with our societies so deeply involved with those in the countries experiencing these upheavals — were also acutely aware that the changes and the risks and opportunities that lay ahead would directly affect us as neighbours.

Of course, expectations were high. It was tempting to read the events in Tunis or Cairo as the opening pages of a fairy tale. But this is the book of history. It contains dark pages too, some of them tragically being written at this very moment. We are bound by a simple truth: achieving lasting change takes time. New democratic institutions do not run smoothly as if by magic. Turning economies around and creating jobs for millions of young men and women are not things that happen at the wave of a wand. Deep tensions do not suddenly dissolve once a dictator has gone.

The long path of transition lies ahead. There will undoubtedly be disappointments along the way. There will be wrong turns, hurdles and setbacks. But I firmly believe that despite the difficulties, the momentum is heading in the right direction and there is no going back. Whatever the future brings, the Arab Spring will remain a turning point. The movement is irreversible. Once the voices of the people have been set free — an unforgettable experience for all those who had never been heard before — those voices cannot be silenced.

It is the responsibility of each country to chart its own course and to do justice to the aspirations of its people. The European Union is committed to staying by their side every step along the way. We are in it for the long run. I want to reaffirm that we still believe in the message of the Arab Spring.

Europeans are well placed to recognize that political change is not painless and does not happen overnight. We know about long transitions. When European integration first started, within my lifetime, a majority of the countries that are now members were not yet democracies. For us, a transition of such magnitude should not be judged by its speed but by its direction and by progress achieved through countless steps forward.

The starting point is free and fair elections. We therefore commend the achievements of Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and other countries in successfully organizing democratic elections, in which many citizens voted freely for the very first time in their lives — elections for which we were happy to lend expertise to national and local authorities.

In order to ultimately bring jobs, social justice and freedom of expression to all, this gigantic democratic process will have to overcome, every single day, the obstacles of corruption, red tape and economic privileges and maintain the political determination to ensure inclusiveness. It is an important effort, to which many parties are contributing. For our part, across the region we offer advice to entrepreneurs and officials, help train judges and police and support journalists and civil society groups.

In our experience, societies are stronger when women are fully able to take part in the political and economic lives of their countries, when their voices are heard and their choices respected. There may be temptations, once power is gained, to refuse to grant to some the rights that until recently were withheld from all. But a democracy can flourish only when it gives all its people — whatever their gender, religion, language or ethnic identity — an equal say and equal rights, guaranteed in law and in practice.

Finally, neighbours can achieve more when they work together. That is why we share experience from our own European union on issues such as connecting energy networks and removing regional obstacles to trade.

Bringing together and reconciling former enemies in a common desire for peace, democracy and prosperity has been one of the European Union's great achievements. Respect, tolerance and non-violence are the core values, without which living together harmoniously is not possible. These are fragile values; sustaining them requires constant attention, especially in a global digital world in which messages of all kinds can spread faster than ever and can easily be exploited.

Tolerance is the ability to withstand criticism, to offer dialogue, to refrain from violence. As such, it shows self-confidence. At the same time, respect for the faith and beliefs of others is a key value for living together. Tolerance and respect acquire their full meaning in an open society that protects freedom of expression. Each and every one of us in this Hall has a responsibility to defend and promote tolerance in and between our countries, as well as respect. Violence and killing, such as that of United States Ambassador Christopher Stevens, can never be justified, regardless of their motivations.

Today I join the voice of Europe to those who have spoken to deplore the civil war raging in Syria. Confronted with the massacre of tens of thousands of people, the world has united in horror and condemnation, but — we must be frank — we have not yet been able to stop the brutal violence. Of course Europe and others provide humanitarian support to refugees. Of course we support individuals who risk their lives collecting evidence of the massacres. Of course our diplomats in Damascus do their utmost to support the United Nations efforts for a peaceful solution. But we will remain powerless unless the international community unites in a common determination to end this senseless violence, which threatens to wreak havoc in the whole region.

I should like to commend the excellent work and strong commitment of the Secretary-General, as well as that of Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi, to find a solution to overcome this tragedy.

I also welcome the initiatives aimed at bringing together the main regional players in a coherent international approach. Earlier this year, European leaders called upon all members of the Security Council to work together in an effort to stop the violence. Today that call is even more urgent.

The country needs to move quickly towards a Syrian-led political transition that meets the democratic aspirations of the Syrian people, while fully respecting the civil and human rights of minorities. It is the only way out. Those responsible for the repression have no place in determining the future of Syria and must step aside. The longer that the conflict continues, the more radicalized people will become, the more blood will needlessly be shed, and the longer it will take for the wounds to heal.

The security situation remains complex and fragile in many parts of the world. The events of the Arab Spring should not distract us from the urgent task of achieving peace in the Middle East — quite the contrary. There are also other pressing issues, including addressing instability and the humanitarian situation in the Sahel region; bringing peace and stability to the Great Lakes region; convincing the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons and missile programmes; and finding a negotiated solution to the Iranian nuclear issue, an issue to which the European Union is directly committed.

We must address all of those concerns, with the knowldege that lasting solutions require political will from the countries involved. In the same spirit, it is important that tensions in the East and South-East Asian maritime areas subside and that disputes be settled peacefully in a spirit of cooperation based on respect for international law.

There are many global challenges that we must tackle together. But without multilateral cooperation on issues ranging from fighting climate change to reducing poverty around the world, we will not succeed. That is why the European Union fully supports a stronger, more effective and more efficient United Nations.

Citizens in all our countries want jobs. In that regard as well, global cooperation is indispensable and is the best way to ensure the world's economic recovery. Our economies have become completely interdependent. No country can solve its issues alone; no country can afford to ignore the problems of others. Do we know that? Yes. Do we act upon that knowledge? Not often enough.

In 2008, at the start of the global financial crisis, there was a brief moment of global awareness, a sense of urgency that led to new forums, joint pledges and coordinated action. Today, although the crisis is still with us, our resolve in the current period after the failure of Lehman Brothers seems to have waned and must be revived. All major economies need to play their part in putting the world economy back on the path of growth. Global growth depends on structural reforms in each of our countries and on reducing the macroeconomic imbalances among them.

In Europe we are doing our part of that work. No effort has been spared to overcome the current difficulties in the eurozone. We have been setting up stronger firewalls to guarantee the stability of our common currency, and we are reforming our economies to become more competitive and create jobs for the future. We have started building a banking union to better manage and contain financial sector risk; and in the coming months we will be defining the perspectives on where we are headed and where we want our economic and monetary union to be in 10 years' time.

We have already come a long way, and today we see the first results of that collective endeavour. Although there is still some way to go, I am confident that those efforts will meet with success and that Europe will emerge from the experience stronger, economically and politically.

(*spoke in French*)

That is what I have come before the Assembly to say. In our view as Europeans, managing the financial crisis not only concerns monetary operations and balancing budgets. What is at stake is the very future of our European project. The project was born in order to overcome the wars and dictatorships that had long haunted our continent. For 60 years, our union has allowed us to end nationalist hatred between countries and to establish a unified continent in peace that seeks social justice and prosperity, which requires daily efforts to maintain those values and establish them more firmly. Gains can always be forfeited. At the global level, it is the task of the General Assembly to strive tirelessly to pursue the same goals that we all share, and to clear the way forward towards greater harmony and greater progress throughout the world.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the European Council for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Herman van Rompuy, President of the European Council, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al Mubarak Al Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait.

Sheikh Jaber Al Mubarak Al Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al Mubarak Al Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

His Highness Sheikh Al Sabah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, in the name of the Government and the people of the State of Kuwait, I have the pleasure of extending to the President and to his fraternal country, Serbia, our sincerest congratulations on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I wish him every success in his endeavours. We would also like to commend the efforts of His Excellency Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser on his successful presidency of the previous session.

I would be remiss if I did not pay tribute to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his continued efforts in leading the Organization and spreading its noble message on the maintenance of international peace and security. I wish him every success in achieving the priorities he has set for his second term, in the political, economic and humanitarian fields.

On our part, we reaffirm the continued cooperation of the State of Kuwait and its full commitment to support the efforts of the United Nations in its endeavours to achieve the aims and purposes of the Charter, as well as to strengthen and activate its role in following up the outcomes agreed upon in international forums. In that context, the State of Kuwait emphasizes the need for a thorough preparation of the 2012 conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, as agreed in the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Numerous challenges face the Organization as it nears its seventh decade. From its inception, the United Nations and all of its organs and agencies have worked to contain and resolve many crises and to meet political, humanitarian and economic challenges. However, in this era of globalization and the information revolution, poor coordination, flaws in joint actions and the failure of some States to fulfil their obligations have prevented the United Nations from reaching conclusive solutions. Therefore, in fulfilment of the aspirations of the peoples we represent, it is important for us to work on reforming, developing and refining the United Nations, as well as providing the firm political will to enhance its performance and to face up to new challenges.

There have been two decades of discussion and in-depth negotiation on the reform of the Security Council, focused mainly on the expansion of the Council's membership, including how many members are needed to achieve an equitable degree of representation, and on improving its working methods. The State of Kuwait reaffirms the need to reform the Security Council to reflect the new international reality and to ensure that Arab and Islamic States are represented fairly, in conformity with their size, their contributions and their role in advancing the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

I should like to quote from the statement delivered by His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait at the Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation held in the Holy City of Mecca on 13 August:

> "The killing and destruction that we witness on a daily basis in sisterly Syria evokes grief and pain. Sadly, a child who has lost his parents and his home, a mother mourning her nearest and dearest, cities that have turned into ghost towns owing to the horrific destruction that has befallen them — these have become all too familiar sights. Such scenes redouble our responsibilities before the Almighty as well as before all our peoples. I call upon us to move without delay to put an end to this bloody tragedy".

We would like to congratulate Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, on his appointment. Kuwait supports him in his undertaking and his determination to continue the work of his predecessor, Mr. Kofi Annan, which yielded the six-point plan that would have resulted in a peaceful resolution of the crisis, had it been actively considered. We reaffirm Kuwait's commitment to international efforts to reach a political solution that fulfils the demands and aspirations of the Syrian people. We would also like to redouble our efforts with the international community, to which we appeal for additional humanitarian assistance to alleviate the pain and suffering of the Syrian people, both within and outside Syria.

This November, the State of Kuwait will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the ratification of its Constitution, which is regarded as the culmination of four centuries of political progress and growth.In consolidation the development of relations between ruler and ruled towards the effective practice of democracy, the Constitution is considered the beacon that guides the State of Kuwait, its Government and people towards a dignified life by establishing rights and duties, guaranteeing basic freedoms, outlining general policies and regulating foreign relations without interference in the internal affairs of other States. The Constitution serves as an interpretation of Kuwait's political vision, based on its belief in, and pursuit of, peace, together with its determination to develop and foster its relations with neighbouring countries, in accordance with the principles of mutual respect and common interests.

Mr. Roman-Morey (Peru), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Relations between Kuwait and Iraq have progressed very positively, and the State of Kuwait regards the painful wound of invasion as healed. The participation of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, in the Arab Summit held in Baghdad in March did much to bring about a qualitative leap forward in our bilateral relations. Moreover, the visit to Kuwait by His Excellency Mr. Nuri Kamel al-Maliki, Prime Minister of Iraq, created an atmosphere of trust and determination that has helped to turn the page with respect to commitments and relations between our two countries. Subsequently, a second round of meetings of the Joint Kuwait-Iraq Ministerial Committee was convened in Baghdad in April, reflecting the desire of both sides to turn away from the past.

Important understandings reflecting the interests of the our countries have been reached on some of the outstanding bilateral issues. There has been agreement also on a work programme to accelerate Iraq's implementation of its remaining international obligations, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, whereupon Iraq will have fulfilled its obligations under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations and will be able to exercise its natural role regionally and internationally. That development will help to improve the climate for achieving regional security and peace, which are prerequisites for the prosperity and progress of a region that has suffered from wars and devastating conflicts for the past three decades.

On the regional level, the State of Kuwait renews its call to the friendly Islamic Republic of Iran to take deliberate and effective steps towards cooperating with international efforts aim at reaching a political settlement with regard to its nuclear programme and at dispelling doubts surrounding its goals and purposes, thereby averting further crises and conflicts, which, unfortunately, have become associated with this vital region of the world. We hope that the Islamic Republic of Iran will be a positive and active party in the region, exercising its role in accordance with the basic rules and principles of mutual respect and common interests, thereby creating a normal environment of cooperation that will serve the peoples of the region, free from interference in their internal affairs.

Along the same lines, we also hope that the Islamic Republic of Iran will cooperate and respond to the initiatives intended to resolve the conflict over the three occupied Emirati islands, in conformity with the principles and norms of international law.

The continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories testifies to the inability of the international community to come up with solutions that will put an end to the plight of the Palestinian people. The Israeli Government, in gross violation of international conventions and norms, persists in its intransigence and illegal policies through its expansion of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, as well as through its blockade of the Gaza Strip. Those actions do not help the cause of the just and lasting peace we desire in the Middle East. We therefore demand that the international community, represented by the Security Council, put pressure on Israel and compel it to implement the resolutions of international legitimacy, the principle of land for peace, the Quartet's road map and the Arab Peace Initiative, so as to guarantee the establishment of the Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the total Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied since 4 June 1967.

Some States face special and chronic challenges that have led to their marginalization on the international scene for many long years. They are at risk of becoming failed States if the international community does not redouble its efforts to help them get back on their feet and start them on a path that will enable them to function normally and to become effective participants in today's world.

In that regard, the State of Kuwait welcomes the decisions and steps taken by President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour and the Yemeni Government to implement the Gulf Cooperation Council's initiative and its implementation mechanism, and to support finalization of the Initiative's remaining items. We also reaffirm our confidence that Yemen, under an elected President and a Government of national unity, is capable of achieving the development and progress in various areas that the fraternal Yemeni people aspire to. We also reaffirm our continued backing and support for the Yemeni Republic's efforts to ensure political and economic stability.

We would also like to congratulate the fraternal Republic of Somalia on the great historic accomplishment represented by its ratification of a provisional constitution and the election of Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as President. We hope that these positive developments will help lift Somalia from a state of conflict and national chaos to one governed by constitutional institutions, thus launching a new political future that will see the ambitions and aspirations of the fraternal Somali people fulfilled.

We commend the positive reaction of the United Nations and the international community to the bloody events that the Muslim minority in Myanmar has been subjected to, and hope that those efforts will help to stop the violence, preserve people's legitimate rights and enable peace to prevail.

The President returned to the Chair.

The peoples and Governments of Islamic countries have expressed their strong condemnation and outrage over the film denigrating the Prophet Muhammad, God's blessing and peace be upon him, and the Islamic faith and its benevolent values. That irresponsible and impudent act has ignited extreme rage among Muslim peoples and communities all over the world, including acts of violence, destruction, and killings in some countries. While the State of Kuwait has denounced the film in the strongest possible terms, as well as the subsequent killing and destruction, which are very far from the spirit and essence of Islam, in this context I would like to recall what His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, proposed at the General Assembly's high-level meeting on the culture of peace, held on 12 and 13 November 2008:

> "The best outcome to our well-intended gathering in this Hall would be a joint international commitment to respect all religions and to avoid damaging, interfering with or ridiculing their symbols, while endeavouring to deter such acts and those who advocate them." *(A/63/PV.46, p. 10)*

We urge the Assembly to give serious consideration at this session to the Amir's proposal and adopt a resolution to implement it for the benefit of the whole of humankind and to promote social peace and security among nations.

Our world faces numerous environmental, economic, social and security issues. Those issues are intertwined and complex and the source of many challenges to States and peoples, particularly in developing and least-developed countries. The consequences of the global financial crisis, the rise in basic commodity prices, the clear negative impact of climate change, the growing frequency of natural disasters and the intensification of terrorism have put the focus on the ugly face of poverty and hunger, as well as the spread of epidemics and communicable and dangerous diseases. Despite the notable accomplishments of many States in their efforts to reach the Millennium Development Goals, we have not yet achieved all the objectives we set ourselves as a whole. It is essential, therefore, that we pursue our joint efforts to limit the effects of the challenges we face and contain them in order to ensure our ultimate full attainment of these noble goals.

While the State of Kuwait is itself considered a developing country, since gaining independence in 1961 it has embarked on a steady course in which we attach great importance to helping developing and least-developed countries. We do this through numerous mechanisms and initiatives, including the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, which gives development aid to Arab, Asian and African countries, as well as countries in Central and Latin America, based on our belief in the importance of international cooperation and helping nations and peoples in need.

Based on our desire to increase joint regional and international activities and enhance their effectiveness, and in recognition of the fact that various forums held around the world have become major channels for examining regional and economic cooperation and maximizing the benefits derived from sharing States' successful experiences, in October last year Kuwait hosted the most recent meeting of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), held annually for the past 10 years at the level of Foreign Minister of the participating countries. Kuwait also called for the convening of the first Summit of the ACD countries, to be held in Kuwait on 15 and 16 October. We hope that this meeting will give leaders of Asian States the opportunity to discuss every topic of importance in the areas of economic, environmental and humanitarian affairs. In March 2013 Kuwait will also host the Arab-African Summit, which we hope will deepen Arab-African cooperation and open new horizons to serve stability, development and cooperation among the peoples of these two groups of countries.

In conclusion, I affirm the State of Kuwait's allegiance to the multilateral international system and to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter. We also believe in the necessity for all States to abide by the obligations and responsibilities they have committed to in international agreements and conferences, thus contributing to finding just and fair solutions to global threats and challenges.

The State of Kuwait believes that dialogue and the promotion of a culture of tolerance, moderation and rejection of violence and extremism are ideal means for advancing the values of equality and justice, in order to reach our higher goal — the maintenance of international peace and security.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait for the statement he has just made.

His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al Mubarak Al Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Mario Monti, Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy.

Mr. Mario Monti, Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Monti (Italy): I wish to warmly congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this session. Rest assured that you have Italy's full support as you assume your crucial responsibilities in the service of international peace and cooperation.

Every day and everywhere, people strive to overcome fear, achieve justice and persevere through hardship and uncertainty to protect their families and livelihoods and to ensure a better future for their children. Governments strive to achieve and preserve peace, justice and prosperity in a world gripped by political tensions, civil wars and a severe economic and financial crisis.

In 2011, financial markets showed serious new signs of tension, due primarily to the deterioration of public finances. What we have been experiencing is not a recurrent cyclical imbalance. In the case of the European Union (EU), it is the deepest and worst crisis in its history.

Other crises threatened the European project in the past, but each time Europeans found a way to continue down the path on which they embarked upon more than 50 years ago. In his memoirs, Jean Monnet noted that Europe would be built through crises. Indeed, it is by solving those crises that Europeans have realized how closely integrated their interests are and how interdependent their economies. Today, the world has learned how essential a viable Europe is to tackling global economic and security challenges, and how important the euro area is to the recovery of the global economy. Today it is clear that "more Europe" is in the general interest, and not just that of Europeans.

We cannot overlook the importance of the measures being taken at the EU level to strengthen governance and fiscal integration, as was underlined by President Van Rompuy. It is also essential that European Governments deliver at the national level. Italy will continue to do its part to further strengthen fiscal sustainability and enhance potential growth.

Historic changes are taking place in the Mediterranean region. Italy has stood by the Arab peoples in their quest for justice and democracy. In the past months, we have engaged with the new leaders of those nations. I found in them a deep commitment that inspires hope. Both bilaterally and through the European Union, we are lending concrete support to their new Governments to assist their recovery, set mutually beneficial trade policies and foster inclusive economic development, thereby promoting stability throughout the region.

There is also an element of self-interest in that pursuit. Instability around the Mediterranean impacts our own security. Conflicts and social unrest on the southern shore spill over to our own shores. Terrorism finds new avenues to reach Europe. Trafficking in human beings has destabilizing effects on the countries of destination and often results tragedies at sea, which we can no longer accept. The situation in the Sahel is of grave concern and a top priority for Italy. It is a volatile mix of fragile institutions and rampant organized crime and terrorist groups. We cannot let the situation deteriorate any further. Italy, for one, will make its contribution jointly with our partners and the States of the region.

The ultimate goals of peace and cooperation will be achieved only if all the countries concerned work together on the basis of mutual respect and a shared sense of purpose. A culture of dialogue must prevail over confrontation. Extremism and intolerance must be isolated and rejected. Rights, dignity and opportunities must be offered to every component and member of our societies, especially minorities and women.

Italy is fully committed to implementing such a vision. For us, protecting and promoting human rights is a long-standing domestic commitment as well as a fundamental pillar of our foreign policy. In that vein, we shall continue to pursue the universal abolition of the death penalty, the protection of minorities, the advancement of the status of women and the free and safe expression of religion or belief. We need to cooperate wisely in firmly rejecting the misrepresentation of religions or beliefs as an instrument of disruption and destabilization.

To achieve that goal, good laws are always necessary, but they are not always enough. Tolerance must be promoted through educational programmes and consistent grass-roots work, engaging the efforts of both Governments and civil society. I strongly encourage the membership of the Assembly and all relevant international organizations to resolutely pursue such an approach.

The Arab Spring has experienced difficulties, yet it has also scored a number of remarkable achievements. Nothing is easy, yet nothing is impossible. But nothing can be achieved without goodwill and good faith, which we will need if we want to put an end to the ongoing massacres and the massive human rights violations in Syria. The regime in Damascus refuses to comply with the resolutions of the Security Council, and it continues to commit indiscriminate violence against civilians. Italy fully supports the mission of the new Joint Special Representative for Syria and strongly urges the Security Council to overcome the stalemate that is preventing effective international action. History will not be lenient in judging those who bear responsibilities.

Nor can we underestimate the increasing danger of nuclear proliferation. Italy supports the commitment of the International Atomic Energy Agency to obtaining clarification of the true nature of the Iranian nuclear programme. We urge Iran to fully comply with all the relevant Security Council resolutions. Italy advocates more effective arms control regimes, and looks forward to concrete nuclear disarmament measures as proposed in President Obama's Prague appeal.

Respect for the rule of law is the basic condition for promoting human rights and maintaining international peace and security. In that context, Mr. President, I welcome your proposal of "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means" as the overarching theme for this session of the General Assembly.

I am also pleased to announce that Italy is now ready to accept the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice in accordance with Article 36, paragraph 2, of the Court's Statute. This is a defining moment for the International Court of Justice and for international jurisdictions in general, since they are the key institutions for interpreting international law and guaranteeing global compliance with its provisions. More and more, effective actions to assure international order and security demand respect for international law.

The same holds true for actions to counter new threats, such as piracy, which is particularly troubling given its impact on the world economy and on the lives of seafarers. International efforts to protect sea lanes and fight piracy can be effective only if all nations cooperate in good faith, according to the established rules of international customary law and United Nations conventions, including those protecting the jurisdiction of the flag State in international waters.

The Organization can expect no less from each Member State, and especially from those Members that aim to have a decisive influence on the rules of global governance. Any erosion of the sending State's exclusive jurisdiction over servicemen on official duty would jeopardize the status of our agents on international missions. Consequently, it would also undermine the sustainability of United Nations peacekeeping missions.

By the same token, we must not tolerate any breach of diplomatic missions, whose inviolability must be respected. We firmly condemn any proposition that violence is an acceptable response to speech.

Transnational organized crime also requires a collective response grounded in the rule of law and the principle of shared responsibility. With the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Italy has actively contributed to, and co-financed with Colombia, a digest to promote the implementation of the Palermo Convention by illustrating best practices. The digest is a practical tool for law enforcement officials and prosecutors. It will be officially presented next month in Vienna, on the occasion of the sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

The United Nations is called upon to play a key role in conflict prevention, the settlement of disputes and providing assistance for crisis management and nation-building, in cooperation with regional organizations. Despite the current financial juncture, Italy continues to do its part in crisis management, peacekeeping and stabilization missions. Our expertise and resources — both military and civilian — will remain engaged in a number of critical theatres, especially Afghanistan and Lebanon. That commitment constitutes a heavy burden, but one we deem a worthy investment for the sake of the common interest.

In that light, helping Somalia to recover its integrity and dignity will remain high on my Government's agenda.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have played a crucial role in changing development cooperation policies and practices. But since they were first agreed upon, the development landscape has changed deeply. New challenges have emerged and other issues and processes have come to the fore. The post-2015 development agenda will therefore have to take those trends into account. It will have to include such important dimensions of development as reducing inequality, fostering credible democracy, promoting human rights, good governance, equitable growth, migration, employment, decent jobs and tackling climate change.

We are very pleased with your decision, Mr. President, to constitute a high-level panel to discuss this fundamental issue, and to appoint three important leaders to conduct the international debate. We are confident that the process of defining the pillars of the future development agenda will be as inclusive as possible, while avoiding the top-down assumptions that emerged in 1995.

In our view, the post-2015 MDGs will have to be harmonized with the inputs that emerged from the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro (Rio+20). The three dimensions of sustainable development — the social, economic and environmental — will be part of the scenarios we face in the future. We will also have to work within the framework of the new Busan Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.

In the area of climate change, sound and balanced management of land and marine resources, involving strengthened trans-boundary cooperation, deserves closer political attention and common application. Some challenges are particularly pressing. Tackling climate change through coordinated emissions-reduction policies is a prerequisite to substantially reducing, and possibly stopping, the serious degradation of planet Earth's fragile ecosystems, on which our lives depend.

In line with our joint strategic objectives to overcome the financial crisis, we attach great importance to innovative sources of financing for development. Italy has helped promote a number of significant initiatives, in particular in the health field.

Migrant remittances play a key role in the development of many countries. That process will be facilitated by achieving the commitments of the Group of Eight (G-8) and the Group of 20 to reduce the average global cost of transferring remittances.

Food security is a priority for the Italian Government's development assistance policy. In 2009, under Italy's presidency, the G-8 adopted the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative, a new and inclusive mechanism that has been joined by more than 40 countries and has funded several food security projects amounting to an estimated $22 billion.

We are still paying careful attention to policies aimed at mitigating the effect of agricultural price volatility. The availability of high-quality, healthy and sustainable food for all humankind is the historical and concrete challenge being taken up by Expo 2015 in Milan. The theme "Feeding the planet" is crucial to the global agenda — from the Millennium Development Goals to Rio+20 and its Zero Hunger initiative, as well as the G-8 and G-20 processes — and is particularly relevant to the work of the United Nations system. All States Members of the United Nations have been invited, and so far almost 100 countries and international organizations have confirmed their participation.

In conclusion, I wish to respond to the appeal you launched in your opening address. Yes, Italy will make an active contribution to the efforts aimed at revitalizing the General Assembly by enhancing its role and efficiency. Today more than ever, the world needs the authority of the United Nations. The reform of the Security Council is a key element of this agenda. We are very much counting on members' assistance in making it happen. An effective Security Council is crucial not only to meeting the challenges to peace, but also to creating a better international order. An equitable reform of the Council is a matter of continuing legitimacy, rather than of increasing the national power of select Member States. The principles of accountability, consensus and regional empowerment must continue to inspire our commitment.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mario Monti, President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Ms. Julia Gillard, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Ms. Julia Gillard, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Julia Gillard, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Ms. Gillard (Australia): You now preside, Sir, over a forum for every voice — an Assembly of all people and nations, one for no country or bloc to dominate solely or lead as one alone, where small and medium-sized countries are truly heard. Australia warmly welcomes your election.

The story of the United Nations is truly global, encompassing all the people of the world. It is a story of the progress of small and medium-sized countries, not just of great Powers. It is a story of reconstruction after world war and of the resettlement of massing millions, of navigating the winds of change and of the end of colonialism, bringing self-determination to the world's great majority, the billions of the global South. It is the story of harnessing new sources of wealth and new resources through a revolution of rising expectations and during decades of dictatorship, famine and war. It is the story of bringing to justice the perpetrators of the worst international crimes and of preventing the worst human atrocities. Now, extending freedom and harnessing new markets, it is the story of lifting billions more out of poverty and oppression. That has been the work of the United Nations for seven decades.

This year we assemble in the knowledge born of those years, neither expecting perfection nor accepting the status quo. We understanding that there is much that we can do together, and more that we can do together than we could ever do alone.

The United Nations articulates humankind's highest ideals. Even more, it makes practical progress towards realizing those ideals in the world. There is no better example of that than the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) — specific, measurable targets of the highest human importance that are now familiar to us all. Twelve years after 2000 and three years from 2015, the progress we have made must be just as familiar. The global economy has grown. Hundreds of millions of people have lifted themselves up. That first fundamental Goal, to halve the proportion of the world's population living in extreme poverty, has now been achieved: 1 billion human lives transformed. A decade ago 100 million children did not get to go to school. That number has been reduced by fully one third, and 33 million human futures have been entirely remade.

But we must all acknowledge that there are vital areas where the international community is failing to achieve change. That is why I accepted the Secretary-General's invitation to co-chair the Millennium Development Goals Advocacy Group alongside Rwanda: to advocate for practical progress in the coming three years. Where the world has fallen short of ambitious goals, our response must be action, not disillusion. That is what Australia will do. We will act.

We will help improve education. Australia's development spending on education doubled in the past five years. We will be among the world's largest education donors in 2015. I am especially pleased to join as an education champion in support of the Secretary-General's Education First initiative to mobilize global support to help achieve education for all children by 2015. I am honoured to lend it Australia's support.

We will help increase gender equality. I am proud to announce that at the Pacific Islands Forum Australia said that it would work alongside our partners in the Pacific on an unprecedented gender initiative: Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development. Australia will provide $320 million over 10 years to support women's political participation, to expand women's leadership and to spread economic and social opportunities in the Pacific. That is a principle underpinning every Australian aid intervention and initiative: empowering women and girls.

We will help fight drug-resistant malaria. The Secretary-General has made malaria one of his key priorities for his second term. It is a priority we share. Since 2000, the world has cut the number of deaths from malaria by 26 per cent. Without those advances, 330,000 more people would have died of malaria last year, the great majority of them in Africa. But malaria itself is fighting back. New drug resistance in malaria must be overcome. Later this year, Australia will hold the Malaria 2012 meeting, bringing together political leaders, civil society and the private sector to accelerate efforts to control and eliminate malaria and combat growing drug resistance.

While we are working hard to realize the MDGs in the next three years, Australia is looking further ahead. The year 2015 is a goal, but it is not a destination. Rather, it must be a new point of departure for much new work. Australia pledges to contribute to the important work of the high-level panel on the post-2015 development agenda.

Australia brings considerable national experience in working with conflict-affected States and least developed countries, especially in our own region. We will seek to apply what we have learned in our work since 2000 to the world's plans for beyond 2015. First, peace is an essential foundation to development, and building peace is vital to the progress of societies recovering from conflict. Peacekeepers today must be peacebuilders, not just stopping conflict but enabling development. Secondly, there can be no poverty alleviation without the creation of wealth and jobs. Growth alone is never sufficient; but to achieve development in the interests of all people we must create jobs and wealth. Thirdly, we cannot make poverty history unless we also consign to history the argument that environmental protection and human development are conflicting global goals. Climate change threatens the security of the food supply that guarantees development. New, clean sources of energy deliver a new source of economic growth.

Australia is one of the world's most successful multicultural and multi-faith nations. The Australian experience proves a deeply important fact. There is nothing natural or inevitable about violent conflict over religious belief. We must reaffirm that again today. The denigration of religious beliefs is never acceptable. Australia seeks to be an example of freedom for all faiths, and we support that in the wider world. However, our tolerance must never extend to tolerating religious hatred and incitement to violence. Whether such attitudes lead to attacks against members of religious minorities or diplomats or to attacks against houses of worship or diplomatic missions, the perpetrators of all such violence must be brought to justice and all such incitement must be condemned. Australia condemns violence and we work for peace.

We proudly do our full part in the work of the United Nations for peace and security. We stringently observe Security Council resolutions aimed at curtailing weapons proliferation activities, like those of North Korea. We take the leading role in the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste. We lead the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, which operates with the United Nation's endorsement. And we have been the largest non-NATO contributor to the United Nations-mandated International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. Australia will bring that record of service to the international community to our service on the Security Council, should we have the privilege to be elected by the United Nations membership in October. There and beyond, our work and the work of every nation for peace must continue.

As we meet, the Syrian Government is turning the instruments of State power against the very people whom State power ought to protect, employing heavy weapons and ground-attack aircraft against civilians and engaging in systematic human rights abuses. Syria's neighbours — in particular Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq — are burdened by growing numbers of refugees and are delivering vital help to desperate people.

The United Nations has done important work already. Australia is doing its part to help through humanitarian aid. We must do everything we can to end the suffering of the Syrian people and to rebuild Syrian society. Those who are committing crimes against humanity must be held accountable. The international community must unite behind Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria. We urge the members of the Security Council to do so and to act decisively.

The international community must also unite in guarding against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It is now six years since the Security Council first expressed concern about Iran's nuclear weapons programme. Iran still refuses to take the urgent steps necessary to build confidence that its nuclear programme is exclusively peaceful. In contravention of successive International Atomic Energy Agency and Security Council resolutions, Iran is moving closer to having the capacity to produce weapons-grade material.

We therefore stand with the world, united in sending a strong signal, through Security Council sanctions, that Iran must change its behaviour now. A nuclear-armed Iran would be a major threat to regional and global security, especially given the shocking and aggressive statements about Israel by Iran's leadership. There remains the opportunity for diplomacy, backed up by robust sanctions, to persuade Iran to change its course. Iran must take this opportunity for change, and the nations of the Assembly must press it to do so.

There must also be change in the Middle East peace process. Australia shares the frustration of the parties at the current impasse.

We understand the strong desire of the Palestinian people for national self-determination. Australia is resolutely committed to the establishment of a Palestinian State that is both independent and viable. That is why we provide significant support to the foundations of a future Palestinian State and build its infrastructure and economy. More than $300 million in aid has been provided for the period from 2011 to 2016. We commend the genuine progress President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad have made in building the institutions and infrastructure for statehood. And no one can doubt Australia's close and continuing friendship with Israel. Our support for the right of Israel and its people to exist in security and peace is a historic commitment in Australian policy, and it will endure.

We urge a return to direct negotiations and that those negotiations be between the two parties. That is the only durable basis for achieving a two-State solution. The present impasse must be overcome. Both sides need to make compromises and avoid provocations. It will take sacrifice on both sides to settle complex and difficult issues such as settlements, borders, security and Jerusalem. The Israeli and Palestinian people deserve no less.

Australia's ideals in the world are those of the United Nations, and Australians know the practical value of the United Nations work. That is why Australia seeks to serve in all the work of the United Nations and on the Security Council. We are a strong democracy, welcoming all the peoples, languages and religions of the world. We are a country of the Asia-Pacific, a neighbour to developing countries, with a perspective of both the North and South. We are a State with a decades-long tradition of capable and committed work in the United Nations. We contributed to the first United Nations peacekeeping force in 1947, and we lead contemporary peacebuilding in our own region.

We support the development of new norms to enable the United Nations and its States Members to act to prevent atrocities and to make the perpetrators of the worst crimes accountable for them. We act as a first responder to humanitarian need, as a donor who stays the course and as a partner in rebuilding after conflict. Australia embraces the high ideals of the United Nations and takes a practical approach to achieving change. The work of the United Nations is a historic task in which Australia wholeheartedly joins.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Julia Gillard, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.

United Nations A/67/PV.10

General Assembly
Sixty-seventh session
Official Records

10th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 26 September 2012, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić .... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Román-Morey (Peru), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 4 p.m.

Address by Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Colombia.

Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Santos Calderón (*spoke in Spanish*): Two years ago, during my first address before the Assembly as President of Colombia (see A/65/PV.15), I expressed my country's aspiration to become a member of the Security Council for the period 2011-2012.

We assumed the responsibility of participating in making decisions about critical situations that threaten world peace in a spirit of absolute independence and well aware of the enormous commitment required to work for international peace and security. It has been a particularly turbulent time, but one during which the aspirations of many peoples who had suffered long conflicts and armed confrontation have been furthered. Countries like Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire are now making strides towards peacebuilding and the rule of law.

In Libya, a ruthless tyranny in place for more than 40 years was dismantled in a process in which the Security Council played a decisive role. My Government did not hesitate to condemn the violent repression of the civilian population justly clamouring for the exercise of their fundamental rights. That is why we joined the Council's decisions furthering a transition towards a democracy that, although still fragile, enjoys the support of the international community as it seeks to entrench itself. There are still violent groups that want to sabotage that process by terrorist methods. I take this opportunity to condemn in the strongest terms the despicable attack perpetrated against the United States consulate in Benghazi. Extremism, terrorism and disregard for human life cannot be allowed to persist.

Today, the Arab world is experiencing a fundamental political transformation, opening the way towards democracy. If the process is to last, it will require respect for people's rights and the creation of conditions conducive to sustainable economic development. We hope that participation by citizens, especially women, will continue to increase and foster democratic systems and opportunities for development and welfare.

With regard to the dire situation in Syria for more than a year and half, I must express our deep frustration with the inability of the international community to put

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an end to the tragedy that every day takes more and more Syrian lives. From this rostrum, we reiterate our call for an end to the attacks and for a political negotiation that will meet the legitimate aspirations of all sectors of Syrian society. Implementing Kofi Annan's six-point plan would greatly contribute to facilitating a Syrian-led political transition. We strongly support the new Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, and wish him much success in his very complex and difficult task.

As a representative of a country that is currently a member of the Security Council, I would like to briefly turn to the matter of its reform, which has been under discussion for 20 years. Colombia believes that consensus should be our guide in developing a comprehensive approach that includes change in both the Council's composition and its working methods so as to promote more effectively the United Nations goals of peace, well-being and humanity.

In our hemisphere, one country that requires comprehensive peacebuilding is Haiti. We continue to work for Haiti. Its recovery will require our continuous support in strengthening its capacities, institutions and productivity so as to generate employment, reduce extreme poverty and promote the United Nations work for development in the country. I urge everyone to persevere in that cause.

A key event for the world this year was the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). Inspired by the Millennium Development Goals model, Colombia led the proposal to establish the sustainable development goals, which was the most important outcome of the Rio+20 process. Today, the sustainable development goals promise to be a fundamental component of the planet's development agenda, and the Secretary-General himself has identified them as one of the five priorities of his legacy. We are therefore especially pleased that our Foreign Minister has been invited to be a member of the high-level panel on the post-2015 development agenda, which held its first meeting yesterday.

This year, the sixth Summit of the Americas gathered in Colombia, with 30 Heads of State and Government from the western hemisphere in attendance. It was a fruitful gathering, which for the first time we organized simultaneously with a business summit attended by the leaders of the premier companies of the Americas. We also held a social forum that brought together people from diverse social organizations on the continents.

The Summit of the Americas in Cartagena was characterized by frank and open dialogue about the most crucial issues for the region and the world. The Governments of the Americas agreed to undertake an analysis and discussion of the track record, effectiveness and future prospects of the so-called war on drugs, as well as possible alternatives to it. It is our duty to question with scientific objectivity whether we are doing the best we can or if there are better options to more effectively combating the scourge. To that end, we mandated the Organization of American States to begin an analysis and discussion, inviting other entities — the first of which would be, of course, the United Nations — to participate.

That is only a first step, but it is of great importance because it is the beginning of a discussion that the world has avoided for many years. We hope that it will ultimately yield concrete results. The debate about drugs that have caused so much harm throughout the world and to my country must be frank and, most certainly, global.

Similarly, in my statement before the General Assembly two years ago, I expressed my conviction that the dawning decade should be the decade of Latin America and the Caribbean — a decade that would consolidate that region of the world as a region of peace, progress and solutions for the rest of the planet. Today, we are pleased to note that our region is indeed experiencing a favourable moment with solid economies, functional democracies and no current conflict among the nations of which it is formed.

Regional coordination mechanisms of relatively recent establishment, such as the Union of South American Nations and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, are evidence of the resolve of our countries and peoples to cooperate. I would like to highlight the enormous potential of the Pacific Alliance that was formalized this year among Mexico, Peru, Colombia and Chile. The Alliance is open to the participation of other States with which we seek to strengthen not only trade but also political and human ties, as well as to the nations of the immense Pacific basin.

I cannot conclude without referring to the special moment that our country is currently experiencing. Against the backdrop of international turbulence, we have been successful in maintaining a healthy economy that has generated over 2 million new jobs over the course of two years, attesting to the major progress we have made in reducing poverty. We have put in place initiatives of great social impact, such as a law for victims, which is the only legislation in the world that seeks to return lands to displaced peasants and to compensate the victims of a conflict that remains ongoing; or major hydrocarbon and mining royalties reform to more fairly distribute the revenues generated by such activities, and thereby promote more effective social development.

Nevertheless, our progress, which has been remarkable, has been curtailed by an absurd conflict that has now lasted half a century. Today, Colombia is suffering through the most prolonged internal armed conflict in its hemisphere, indeed perhaps one of the longest-lasting in the world — an ever-more anachronistic and inexplicable conflict. Above all, it is inexplicable in the light of the development of our democracy and of our social progress.

Aware of that, and without neglecting the protection and security of the Colombian people and without ceding an inch in the fight against terrorism and crime, my Government is resolved to move forward prudently, seriously and firmly, and without repeating the mistakes of the past, by entering into conversations with the guerrilla forces in order to achieve an end to the armed conflict.

After two years of exploratory contacts, we have announced to the country and to the world that a phase of talks will be initiated on a short and concrete agenda, which we hope will allow us to achieve the desired outcome. The talks will begin in Oslo during the first half of October and will continue in Havana, thanks to the goodwill of the Governments of Norway and Cuba, which will serve as guarantors. We will also have the backing of the Government of Venezuela, to which we are grateful for its valuable support, and of the Government of Chile, which will be working with us during the second phase.

Today, before the General Assembly, I wish to thank the international community for the support it has expressed at outset of the talks and for its willingness to cooperate and help in any way that is necessary. We embark upon the talks with moderate optimism and in the absolute conviction that it is an opportunity that we cannot squander to achieve a peace that is good not only for Colombia but for the entire region.

With regard to my statement today, a few days ago I asked the Colombian people through social media what message they wanted me to bring here to the General Assembly. Among the many messages I received, I want to share one from my compatriot Henry Rodríguez Chacón: "An entire generation wants to wake up one day to the news of a peace agreement." That is the most heartfelt wish of the Colombian people.

Aware that the process must have brief deadlines and precise terms if it is to be successful, I trust that I will be able to deliver to the Assembly next year a positive outcome of the effort, which we undertake enthusiastically with a view to ending our 50-year conflict.

We do not want to talk just about peace; we want to build conditions for peace. That is what we are doing on a daily basis with the actions of our Government and now with the talks that we are initiating. Today, with great hope, we present the world with this new special moment for my country, Colombia.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Colombia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland.

His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

King Mswati: It is an immense pleasure for me to join other Heads of State and Government at this sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly. I should like to begin by congratulating the President upon his election to steer the work of the Assembly at this session. His experience and abilities are well known and respected. We have full confidence that he will take the Organization to greater heights. The Kingdom of eSwatini is ready to give him all the support that he deserves in carrying out this mammoth task.

I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his detailed report on the work of the Organization (A/67/1). We have seen the staff of the United Nations working very hard, sometimes in very difficult and hostile environments, dedicating their service to helping those who require our assistance and support. The Kingdom of eSwatini commends the Secretary-General and his dedicated team for working tirelessly to ensure the realization of all aspirations of the Organization.

As we gather here, we must always remember that the role of the United Nations is to keep peace throughout the world, to develop and to help nations to work together in resolving challenges such as hunger, unemployment, conflicts, disease and illiteracy, among others. The United Nations also aims to be the centre for harmonizing the actions of nations to achieve our aspirations.

We are meeting here at a time when the whole world is facing numerous challenges, such as the economic and financial crisis. The Kingdom of eSwatini believes that the United Nations is the appropriate forum to deliberate on these challenges in order to come up with united global solutions. As part of the global community, the Kingdom of eSwatini has not been spared from this economic predicament. Our social development programmes that enhance the delivery of the Millennium Development Goals and national projects, such as job creation and poverty alleviation strategies, have been adversely affected by the prevailing situation. The gains we have made in the fight against HIV and AIDS through the rollout of antiretroviral treatments remain threatened by the uncertainty around the financial sustainability of the programme.

We wish to acknowledge the support we continue to receive from the Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in mitigating all diseases. The Fund has gone a long way in injecting resources into our national programme of promoting health as a key national priority. The need to work together to overcome these challenges could not have been more essential.

In our efforts to address global economic challenges, we should be conscious of the social implications of some of the proposed solutions. Our strategies should not create more hardship, but rather find answers that mitigate the difficulties we face. I am confident that, with our wealth of different experiences, we stand to benefit from valuable strategies, especially from those States that have not been seriously affected by the financial crisis. We urge those countries to share their experiences for the benefit of all Member States. The Kingdom of eSwatini calls on the United Nations to consider making these challenges among its top priorities during this session.

The Kingdom of eSwatini last month converged on Sibaya for dialogue on social, economic and political issues with a view to crafting solutions and agreeing on a way forward that would best improve our livelihoods. Sibaya is a place where every citizen is free to participate irrespective of gender, creed, religion or affiliation, among other things. We believe in the full participation of all citizens at the grass-roots level in the decision-making process. This forum is an institution where key national pronouncements are made and national sustainable development strategies conceived. Our national Constitution and National Development Strategy are outputs of this structure. This practice has been passed on from generation to generation, and has continued to serve us well, since it allows the people to contribute to their own welfare.

Like many other States Member of the Organization, the Kingdom of eSwatini has been working hard towards the ratification of United Nations conventions, as well as of continental and regional protocols. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the Sibaya forum provided the whole nation with an opportunity to discuss those conventions and protocols, which have since been ratified by Parliament and deposited with the Secretary-General. We are pleased that we can now be counted among the countries that have successfully ratified United Nations conventions and protocols.

The world we live in has become a complicated place with the advent of modern technology. We remain faced with the challenge of how best to take advantage of this technology, such as social media, to promote peace and stability. If there is anything we need to do, it is to promote peace in the world. It is true, and we fully agree with the assertion that there is no need to promote violence of any kind, be it the killing of diplomats, the forced removal of Governments, or any other form. In this world, we must all live together in peace, whether as Muslims, Christians or any other traditional believers. We must learn to respect each other irrespective of race, creed or religious affiliation. If we practiced those principles, the world would be altogether a different and better place. As human beings, we must turn the page, forget the past and live together for the benefit of generations to come.

On the African continent, we are encouraged by the concerted efforts of our fellow brothers and sisters who are committed to resolving their differences in a peaceful manner. We encourage speedy resolutions in areas where pockets of conflict remain, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan and some North African countries, to mention but a few.

The Assembly knows that Somalia has also been without a stable Government for a long time, and we hope that new developments will bring about lasting peace. In that vein, the Kingdom of eSwatini welcomes the recent development that has taken place in Somalia. We hope that the election of the President will bring the desired stability.

We extend the call for peace beyond Africa, to the Middle East, where we continue to witness conflict. The war in Syria has claimed the lives of too many citizens and must come to an end. We appeal to the people of Syria to discourage the use of force in resolving their differences. We encourage the use of dialogue in cases where they do not see eye to eye. We implore the Syrian Government and the other stakeholders to sit down in dialogue in order to find a lasting solution to the current impasse. The barrel of the gun will bring nothing but misery.

The United Nations and the League of Arab States have sent a Joint Special Representative to work with the people of Syria. We hope that all stakeholders will make good use of the Joint Special Representative towards finding a peaceful and lasting solution to their differences. The Kingdom of eSwatini urges States Members of the United Nations to work together in supporting all efforts aimed at helping the people of Syria to resolve the conflict.

We also note that the Israel-Palestine conflict remains unresolved. A peaceful settlement of the issue is deeply desired and urgently necessary. Our position is unambiguous. The most viable solution is to have the two States of Israel and Palestine coexisting side by side in peace and harmony.

We must commend the recent positive developments with regard to relations between the Republic of China on Taiwan and mainland China, which are steadily improving. Indeed, it is very encouraging as it demonstrates that the tensions between the two countries have subsided. We hope that one day they will be able to resolve all of their differences and live happily with each other. We are witnessing increasing trade, as well as flights, between the two countries. Recently, it was also interesting to see mainland China host an African summit, to which the countries that are friends of Taiwan were also invited.

As an African country, we would like to thank mainland China for its continued support to African countries. We have no doubt that the potential of the two peoples working together side by side will make a significant difference in the world. We hope that the new developments will pave the way for Taiwan to participate fully in all United Nations entities, because the people of Taiwan desire to become part of the global community.

Peace will continue to elude us until we properly address the issue of weapons of mass destruction. It is clear that those weapons are not necessary to humankind. Their mere presence is a recipe for conflict as each country seeks to gain power over others. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, adopted by many Member States, must be enforced to ensure the complete elimination of these weapons.

We have not seen any tangible proof of compliance with the internationally agreed time frames, which is a cause for serious concern requiring urgent attention. The mere existence of those weapons creates unnecessary tension that could result in a very hostile world environment. We implore those countries endowed with uranium resources to use them for other essential economic development needs, such as power generation.

The Kingdom of eSwatini recognizes the important role that the Security Council plays in the pursuit of international peace and security. The Charter of the United Nations clearly stipulates an international order that ensures the rule of law. We call upon the General Assembly at this session to deliberate on Security Council reform, as not all regions are well represented. We wish to reiterate the African position on the Security Council, claiming two seats in the permanent category and five seats in the non-permanent category. The full representation of all regions in the Council will ensure that we all own the decisions of that important security organ. We should all be given equal treatment. No region or country should impose its influence over others. We wish to see finality in that urgent matter, since it has dragged on for a very long time now.

The high-level meeting on sustainable energy for all, which was held alongside this session, gave Heads of State and Government a forum to deliberate on issues that promote the protection of our environment. That meeting provided us with an opportunity to revisit the commitments made towards sustainable energy for all.

The destruction of the environment has had devastating effects on many of our countries. The United Nations must expedite the processes towards protecting the environment by enforcing the use of environmentally friendly technologies and practices by Member States. We call upon the developed countries to honour their commitments made prior to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro.

Finally, allow me to say that as we meet during this session, let us adopt resolutions that will provide lasting solutions to the challenges faced by humankind the world over. We wish the United Nations every success as it pursues its objective of creating a peaceful environment and coexistence among all the nations of the world. Let honesty, peace, stability and tolerance prevail across the globe.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland for the statement he has just made.

His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Otto Fernando Pérez Molina, President of the Republic of Guatemala

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guatemala.

Mr. Otto Fernando Pérez Molina, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Otto Fernando Pérez Molina, President of the Republic of Guatemala, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

President Pérez Molina (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow me to greet Mr. Vuk Jeremić, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. At the same time, I would like to express my appreciation to Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for his stewardship during the previous session.

I have the honour to represent Guatemala for the first time before this highest organ of the United Nations. Guatemala, and my Government in particular, will always support any initiative that furthers the noble objectives and principles of the United Nations, summarized in the words "peace", "development" and "human rights".

My country is committed to the peaceful settlement of conflicts, which is the central theme of our debate. In that spirit, in late 2008 we agreed to sign a special agreement with our neighbour, Belize, seeking a resolution of a long-standing territorial dispute through the International Court of Justice. Our Congress unanimously approved the agreement, and on October 6, 2013, simultaneous plebiscites will be held in both countries to democratically ratify our commitment to resorting to the International Court of Justice.

Furthermore, we Guatemalans lived through an armed conflict that lasted 36 years. I was a soldier who participated in that conflict. And because I know war, I highly value dialogue. That is why in 1996 I was one of the signatories of the peace accords in my country. That motivates me to reaffirm my support for the President's wise decision to convene this session to discuss the peaceful settlement of conflicts.

My Government has set three overarching objectives in order to advance firmly and sustainably towards a Guatemala that fully enjoys the benefits of peace. First, we have proposed the Hambre Zero initiative, which seeks to reduce the chronic malnutrition that affects over 40 per cent of our children below five years of age. That reduction will be sustainable only if we are able to better develop our rural areas in order to permanently reduce the poverty of families living off the land, particularly indigenous families.

Secondly, my Government is promoting a pact for security, justice and peace, which seeks to reduce the social violence that afflicts our country. In taking office, I found a country with high levels of violence; as a result, reducing those levels has become a priority of my Government. We are certain that we can attain progress in that area, since the indicators over the past nine months alone already show a notable decrease of 13 per cent in the number of homicides compared to the same period last year. I can therefore state that, without being satisfied with those indices, we are nonetheless moving in the right direction in fulfilling our promise of reducing the levels of violence and increasing security in Guatemala in an environment of full respect for human rights. In this endeavour, we work closely with neighbouring countries, and especially with our Central American brothers.

Thirdly, we are campaigning on the economic front through the Fiscal and Competitiveness Pact. Fiscal affairs have been one of the weaknesses of our institutional arrangement, and for this reason, during the very first days of my Government we successfully promoted a fiscal reform, approved by Congress, that increased our fiscal receipts by 15 per cent, allowing us to maintain a stable macroeconomic environment by reducing the fiscal deficit without having to reduce public expenditures. At the same time, fiscal stability is allowing us to stimulate private investments that generate employment opportunities; that is, dependable jobs, as demanded by our citizens.

Unfortunately, our efforts in relation to the three challenges previously mentioned — lowering chronic malnutrition among children, reducing violence, and promoting employment — are nullified in part by the scourge of drug trafficking. At least 40 per cent of the homicides in our country are linked to the illicit drug traffic, and my Government is obligated to allocate scarce fiscal resources to combat transnational gangs that operate between the producing countries in the South and the consuming countries in the North. Moreover, my country has gradually been transformed into a producer and a consumer of drugs, thereby compounding an already difficult situation.

The existing framework, born out of the international conventions adopted during the past five decades and currently in force, has not achieved the desired results. The consumption markets expand instead of decreasing; the number of producer countries and the type of drugs available tend to multiply; and the routes chosen for marketing and trafficking are trending towards diversification. The drug problem is growing in size and complexity. It involves an increasing number of countries and persons. Clearly, it is a transnational phenomenon, and it is for that reason that I raise it in this universal forum.

It seems that the basic premise of our war against drugs has serious shortcomings since, unfortunately, it has not been possible to eradicate drug consumption. I believe that the time has come to accept this fact and to adapt our fight against the scourge in such a way as to take into account the new realities.

Our youth, the group most affected by drug consumption, demands more effective responses from us. Let us realize that the problem is more a public health issue than a matter for criminal justice and deal with it accordingly. We must offer treatment, prevention, social protection, economic opportunities and development for the communities involved in the drug market. Let us not fill our jails with thousands of young people, who would have a different kind of life if we were to approach the problem in a different way. I invite the Member States assembled here to jointly seek avenues that will enable us to offer our young people a more promising future, improving their opportunities for a better life and at the same time reducing violence and poverty.

Fifty years provides sufficient time for us to evaluate results, to gauge what we have achieved and to conclude why we do not have the results we had hoped for. In that regard, I also call on Member States to review the international regulations that currently govern our global policies regarding drugs. The Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961, as amended by the 1972 Protocol, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971 and the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988 must be evaluated on the basis of its results and brought up to date to allow us to achieve the desired outcomes. That is a serious challenge that must be addressed in all earnestness so that we can have a respectful and frank multilateral dialogue, informed by clear scientific evidence regarding the best strategies available to ensure that our young people are protected from the scourge of drugs.

In that regard, last April the Heads of State and Government of the Western Hemisphere met for the Summit of the Americas in Cartagena de Indias. Our host, Mr. Santos Calderón, President of Colombia, invited us to discuss new avenues to combat drug trafficking. The agreement reached was that we should undertake studies to assess new alternatives, which we would discuss next year, in June, at a meeting of the Organization of American States in Guatemala. That is a step in the right direction and one that we believe should be emulated at the global level.

In the same spirit, Guatemala would like to propose the establishment of a group of countries that are well disposed to reforming global policies on drugs. The group would bring together Governments that are interested in promoting in appropriate international forums an objective and rigorous assessment of prevailing policies and inconsidering new, creative and innovative alternatives. We must seek such new avenues responsibly and tenaciously, and I am sure that with the cooperation of all producing, consuming and transit countries, we will succeed.

Allow me to stress that it is not a matter of abandoning the fight against the scourge of drugs. Rather, it is a matter of arming ourselves better and responding with greater effectiveness and clarity, because our children and grandchildren deserve a more integrated and effective response from the international community.

I would like to conclude my thoughts by reaffirming that Guatemala will not renege on any international commitments to which it is party. We have no desire for unilateral action, which would only sow chaos and conflict when the response should be a global one. We will wait patiently to change our policies in Guatemala until the international community moves forward and arrives at a new consensus. At the same time, however, I commit my leadership to moving forward on evaluating the global policy on drugs, so as to make it more effective and based on current international standards that reflect the challenges and realities of the twenty-first century.

Before concluding, I would like to briefly raise three points that I believe to be important to this meeting of the General Assembly. First, as a demonstration of our commitment to defending and promoting human rights on all fronts, on 14 January I said that Guatemala would seek to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and thus become a party to the Statute. I am pleased to report that, on 2 April, we deposited our instrument of ratification.

Secondly, in that same speech, I indicated that we would make it a priority of our foreign policy to contribute to the ideals of democracy, justice and peace, within a framework of absolute respect for international law. In that regard, I indicated that Guatemala would fulfil its duties on the Security Council responsibly and in a constructive spirit. I believe that so far we have kept that promise, and we are pleased that in six days Guatemala will assume the presidency of the Council for the month of October, and we will continue to act responsibly.

Thirdly, regarding the events of recent weeks, we reject all acts that defame religions. At the same time, we condemn violence in any form, including assaults on diplomatic missions. Such expressions of intolerance offend us all.

Finally, I would like to recall that, on 21 December, Guatemala will celebrate the beginning of a new era according to the Mayan calendar. That era, 13 Baktun, marks the start of a very positive new age that will enable and invite us to renew physical and spiritual energies in an atmosphere of peace, cooperation and dialogue. All heads of State and Government are invited to join us in Tikal National Park to share in the dawn of this new era. The Mayans of yesterday and today, and all Guatemalans, await them with open arms.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guatemala for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Otto Fernando Pérez Molina, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar.

Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rajoelina (*spoke in French*): As President of the Transition of Madagascar, it is a great honour for me to participate in the general debate of the United Nations for the second time. The theme of the sixty-seventh session is akin to a call for unity, for shared contemplation and for generally revisiting existential questions and human values in the face of situations around the world where peace is extremely precarious.

The last few years have indeed been marked by differences of opinion, political disputes and conflicts of interest. The world today faces new challenges to stability and the maintenance of peace. Various efforts and initiatives have been undertaken to deal with conflicts that are not homogeneous and disputes that do not always play out along the same lines. People's interests differ and their approaches are not all equal.

Today the list of the forms that global conflicts take leads us to an obvious reality: geostrategic variations conform to no one rule, and they are in perpetual flux. The wise words of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his statement at the opening of the sixteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement seem particularly revealing in that context. Did he not stress that among the challenges that must be met, there are all too many political disputes between member States of the Non-Aligned Movement itself? Did he not urge the protagonists in the Syrian crisis to immediately institute a ceasefire and a halt to the violence? And yet we can only deplore the fact that his call produced no result. Scores of innocent people are still dying every day, and over recent months they now number in the thousands. We firmly condemn this loss of human life. The Earth continues to run with the blood of innocents, spilled violently not only in Syria but in other parts of the world as well.

Given this state of affairs, despite the complexity of the challenges those conflicts present, the Secretary-General has not stood idle. We can only commend his determination to strive tirelessly to seek a negotiated settlement. States and other bodies must join forces to maintain peace, stability and security in the world. We cannot be passive witnesses to current or future disasters. The Republic of Madagascar sets particular store by the relevance and importance of the principles set forth in the United Nations Charter, as a source of inspiration as well as a pillar of support for the interdependence of nations and peoples. That being the case, human rights, the law of States, the rule of law and the other international regulatory tools place before leaders their responsibilities.

The League of Nations defined the rule of law as a principle of governance based on the submission of all individuals and institutions, including the State, to the adopted and published laws, without distinction as to social or economic status; on the equality of everyone before an independent, impartial justice system; and on the harmonization of national laws with international human rights standards. No one should be above the law, and the culture of impunity must be banished.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria), Vice-President, took the Chair.

National conflicts today transcend borders and are becoming international problems. More than ever, the role of diplomacy and international negotiations face difficulties. The consequences of disputes play out in a number of ways, including with problems of impunity, instability in the Arab and Muslim world, the case of Somali piracy, illegal immigrations, persons displaced by war, problems regarding the Rom issue, religious confrontations, management of land and sea borders, and food insecurity. It is undeniable that much remains to be done to save human lives, because still civilian populations remain the primary victims of conflicts and disputes throughout the world.

The world is in upheaval, and many countries are in a situation of transition. Their peoples demand change and hope for sustainable development. Those countries need to be supported and encouraged, not sanctioned. In that context, allow me to highlight the case of my own country, Madagascar.

Madagascar is a country emerging from crisis, thanks to the involvement of the bodies of the Southern African Development Community and the support of the African Union, the Indian Ocean Commission and the International Organization of la Francophonie. A road map was signed and adopted by the Malagasy political parties in September 2011. Thus, several significant steps have been taken. The Malagasy parties have honoured their commitments. All the transitional institutions have been set up, including a national unity Government and the transitional Parliament. The road map, which we can call a political agreement, has allowed us to launch the electoral process.

Madagascar needs to take its destiny into its own hands, to write its own history, and to end the cycle of political instability through the holding of credible and transparent elections, guaranteed by the establishment of the Independent National Electoral Commission of the Transition. Above all, recently, in concert with United Nations experts, the electoral timetable for

Madagascar was officially announced, including the holding of presidential elections scheduled for 8 May 2013. Thus I launch a solemn appeal to all international partners, all Member States and friends of Madagascar to support us and encourage us in that approach, which is the only and most democratic path forward.

Profoundly committed to the values of solidarity, tolerance and peace, Madagascar is now searching for swift development and a better future. During the three and a half years of transition and despite all attempts at destabilization, we have worked tirelessly every day to honour our commitments and ensure the protection of our countrymen, all the while addressing social problems. In spite of challenging times, and despite the suspension of international aid and subsidies, which once accounted for 60 per cent of the State budget, we have been able to keep the administration functioning normally and have honoured all our commitments and debts.

Madagascar is indeed one of the least developed countries. Nevertheless, it is one of the least indebted countries in the world since its debt amounts to only 5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), compared to other countries whose debt rate can reach up to 238 per cent of GDP. Therefore, it is possible to develop our country and create our wealth through our own resources. That is the challenge that we are meeting.

Now it is high time to embark on in-depth reform to create an effective system that meets the highest expectations of our respective populations — not forgetting, obviously, the need to double or even triple our commitments to fighting poverty and promoting sustainable development. Here today, I launch an appeal for international solidarity to channel the transition towards the building of a more promising future — but without stifling us.

The Malagasy people need their full and entire independence, but above all they must be able to hold transparent and therefore democratic elections. I know that everyone here is sincerely willing to lend us support. So allow me to give the Assembly the solution. The best way to help us is to trust us, honour the commitments made and let us shoulder our own responsibilities. In the name of universal values and principles, anyone meeting the conditions of eligibility dictated by law is fully entitled to exercise that liberty. That is a fundamental principle, and all States must respect it. The Malagasy people alone — not other countries or external pressure — have the sovereign right to decide who should guide their destiny. The Malagasy people alone will choose the man or woman who will lead Madagascar.

If confidence is shown in the Malagasy people, they will be grateful. The concepts of non-interference and respect for the sovereignty of each country establish mutual trust, which is a basic rule for all international negotiations. They are among the peaceful means needed to build lasting peace. Efforts must be made to put an end to the inequalities in how countries in political crisis are treated. The realities on the ground and popular aspirations must be acknowledged in order to avoid making the wrong decision.

Despite our disagreements and our differences on how to achieve a peaceful settlement of our conflicts, we the States Members of the United Nations are unanimous in our firm desire for peace. The United Nations system cannot just be the police of the world; it also needs to be a source of hope and of values. Our societies need to exist and find their way through their own values, because it is social and economic ills, injustice, the lack of protection for vulnerable populations and intolerance for minorities that often cause States to collapse.

As far as its modest means allow, the Republic of Madagascar is determined to contribute to achieving our shared goals. The peace accord is fragile and needs to develop. To quote Martin Luther King, Jr., "All progress is precarious, and the solution of one problem brings us face to face with another problem". It is our duty and responsibility to provide a better future for the generations to come. Global stability requires tolerance, assistance, the creation and equitable sharing of wealth, and poverty reduction through sustainable development and reconciliation. The principles of adjustment or settlement of international disputes by peaceful means requires a return to our values, gender balance and equality, and, above all, democratic alternation. God bless our nation!

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Nicolae Timofti, President of the Republic of Moldova

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Moldova.

Mr. Nicolae Timofti, President of the Republic of Moldova, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Nicolae Timofti, President of the Republic of Moldova, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Timofti (*spoke in Moldovan; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session and to wish him every success in that highly honourable and important role. I am convinced that his rich experience will contribute to the achievement of significant results in our work together. I convey my appreciation as well to his predecessor, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, for the exemplary manner in which he led the sixty-sixth session. I also wish to pay tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his ongoing efforts to revitalize the global role of the United Nations and to bring reforms to the Organization.

It is a great honour for me to speak from this rostrum for the first time on behalf of the people of the Republic of Moldova. Twenty-one years ago, my country broke away from the Soviet empire, and today it is undergoing a process of democratic transformation, with membership in the European Union as its ultimate goal. After a period of several years marked by political turmoil, my country now enjoys political stability, which allows it to develop and modernize. We have firmly defined European integration as our objective and have revived the economic and social reforms. Our priorities are the establishment of the rule of law and comprehensive judicial reform, with an emphasis on fighting corruption, modernization of the economy and reintegration of the country.

The support and assistance provided by our European partners from Brussels and United Nations Member States are extremely important for us and assure us that we are on the right path. Two decades ago, on the very day the Republic of Moldova joined the United Nations, the peace in my country was shaken. The armed conflict in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova lasted for five months and caused the loss of many lives. It was a tragic period that, while now past, continues to pose a serious challenge in the present. Since the end of the hostilities, Moldova has firmly embarked on the road towards a peaceful settlement of that conflict. Twenty years of negotiations have strengthened our belief that that is the only viable path to follow in order to reach a political settlement.

It is obvious that the perpetuation of the conflict does not offer any real benefit to the majority of the people on either bank of the Nistru river. It undermines our national security and territorial integrity, hampers economic development and divides our society. Moreover, the conflict keeps the population of the Transnistrian region in isolation, incites human rights violations and generates economic stagnation on the left bank of the Nistru. The current political and economic trends show that preserving the status quo is not a viable scenario anymore. All of our international partners share the view that there is no alternative to a reunified Moldova. Our message in that regard is firm – 20 years are enough to overcome the mistrust of the past and it is time to start building a shared future.

The key elements in the approach of the Moldovan authorities to resolving the conflict are also clear. Our ultimate goal is to reintegrate the Republic of Moldova within its internationally recognized borders as a functional State with a clear European perspective. The Transnistrian region should be granted a special status within Moldova, which will provide the region with a comfortable level of self-governance. Defining the special status is the core task of the political negotiations in the "5+2" format. That negotiation process should lead to a reasonable compromise based on the principles of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova.

In parallel, we will continue to implement confidence-building measures aimed at bringing communities from both banks of the Nistru River closer to each other. By promoting business links, ensuring freedom of movement, protecting human rights, improving security and combating criminality, we will prepare a better ground for a political solution. Transformation of the existing military peacekeeping mechanism into an international civilian mission aimed at building confidence rather than separating the sides has also become an imperative.

Our international partners provide an essential contribution to bringing that conflict to an end. Growing assistance from the European Union is an encouraging example in that regard. The negotiation process now needs a strong stimulus, and we believe that our international partners can demonstrate the necessary political will to that end. We call on the 5+2 format negotiators, namely, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, the European Union and the United States of America, to pool their efforts and work together towards the final resolution of the Transnistrian conflict and reintegration of the Republic of Moldova.

It is also important to reiterate that Russian forces are still present on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, without the consent of the host country and in breach of the Moldovan Constitution and international commitments, and they should be finally withdrawn.

The universal character of the United Nations and its unique role in managing international relations are widely recognized. There is no alternative to this Organization. Yet, globalization and the global financial crisis have demonstrated the need to reform the Organization in order to ensure the progressive and sustainable strengthening of the United Nations. I am referring in particular to Security Council reform, to which a compromise solution should be found. We believe that any proposal for its reform should take into account the legitimate aspirations of all regional groups, including granting an additional non-permanent seat to the Eastern European States.

In its capacity as a member of the Human Rights Council, the Committee on Conferences, the Policy and Programme Coordination Committee, the Committee on Information, the Commission for Population and Development and other United Nations elective bodies, the Republic of Moldova will continue to support efforts towards the comprehensive reform of the United Nations system and its main bodies and organs, including the revitalization of the General Assembly and the reform of the Security Council aimed at enhancing the efficiency, transparency, accountability and representativeness of the system.

The relationship between the United Nations and regional organizations is of paramount importance for the maintenance of international peace and security. In many instances, all those organizations have unique and complementary capacities that, when properly coordinated, can contribute decisively to the prevention and management of conflicts, including protracted ones. From that point of view, during this session we will strongly support the consideration by the General Assembly of the issue of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, particularly the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and other organizations.

In the same context, considering the distinct objective devoted to democracy and economic development, the increased potential and role in economic development and regional integration, as well as the strong determination of the countries of the Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova (GUAM) Organization for Democracy and Economic Development to actively contribute to international security, stability and peace, the delegations of its member States have decided to advance for consideration of the General Assembly during its current session a draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and GUAM.

At this stage, the process of development and integration of our States is still burdened by some outstanding problems, including unresolved conflicts in the territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova. We reaffirm our unswerving commitment to finding peaceful solutions to those conflicts on the basis of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our countries.

Promoting the rule of law at the national and international levels is at the heart of the United Nations mission and is fundamental to achieving durable peace, supporting openness in Government, the effective protection of human rights and sustained economic growth and development. We emphasize the importance of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels (A/67/PV.3), held on 24 September, and will continue to support efforts in that direction during the sixty-seventh session. In our view, strengthening the rule of law will help to maintain peace, promote development and enhance cooperation, and is therefore conducive to the achievement of the goal of building a harmonious world.

The non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, disarmament and the efficient control of armaments remain vital topics on the international cooperation agenda, which need the common understanding, political will and engaged efforts of all States and international organizations. The Republic of

Moldova fully supports the international community in exerting continuous control of and applying the necessary preventive measures against unlawful attempts to develop weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, which pose a real threat to international security and are often used to challenge the existing world order.

The Republic of Moldova established significant objectives and is undertaking tangible steps in accomplishing its priorities in the field of arms control. In cooperation with our partners, the Government of the Republic of Moldova is in the process of adjusting to the best international standards, adopting dual-use goods export control legislation, improving small arms and light weapons management for civilians and the military, ensuring proper border management, and actively cooperating at the regional and international levels.

Military conflicts in different regions of the planet and the global economic crises have brought human rights issues once again to our attention. The principles of international law and human rights standards can be promoted only by joint efforts and decisions. Acts of aggression, including attacks against the personnel and integrity of diplomatic facilities, represent a violation of international norms and deserve our firm condemnation. The relevant bodies of the United Nations, including the Human Rights Council, have sufficient instruments to take action on behalf of States in order to prevent human rights violations, conduct country evaluations and provide tailored solutions.

As a member of the Human Rights Council for the term of 2010 to 2013 and, as Vice-Chair of the Third Committee at its previous session, the Republic of Moldova continuously pledges to keep an open mind in furthering the cause of promoting and protecting human rights worldwide.

The world economic crisis is an incentive for putting into practice the idea of sustainable development, which could simultaneously provide solutions for maintaining the pace of economic growth and prevent climate change. We support the renewal of the global commitment made at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and the agreement on establishing the sustainable development goals (see resolution 66/288, annex). We believe that promoting a green economy model will help enterprises to reconfigure in order to streamline natural, human and economic investments.

Finally, I would like to reiterate that the Republic of Moldova is a strong supporter of the United Nations role in global governance and the management of international crises. We believe in the potential and capacities of the United Nations to find adequate responses and take concrete actions aimed at resolving the ever-increasing global challenges. The Republic of Moldova is definitely contributing to that activity.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Moldova for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nicolae Timofti, President of the Republic of Moldova, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Estonia.

Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ilves: It is an honour once again to address the United Nations. This year I would like to focus on responsibility. The recent years of economic and financial turbulence have demonstrated a strong correlation between economic prudence and responsibility in fiscal matters. We have realized, I hope, that sustainability is not a term we apply only to development, but concerns all of us. Responsibility and sustainability apply to the three broad topics I shall address today: human rights, good governance and development. But before doing so, I would like to speak about diplomacy.

The purpose of diplomacy is to prevent war. When diplomats are attacked we are all less secure. We know what we are talking about — we too have had our diplomats attacked, mercifully without the horrific consequences that occured in Benghazi. Therefore, the recent assaults in many parts of the world on diplomats, embassies and consular premises are deplorable. Regardless of their motivations, such acts are unjustifiable and must be universally and unequivocably condemned. All countries must fulfil their international legal obligation to protect diplomatic and consular properties and personnel.

As recent events have demonstrated, when it comes to human rights it is not enough merely to keep your own house in order. As a conscientious member of the international community, Estonia feels the responsibility to do more globally. That includes paying attention to human rights violations in places torn by conflict, as well as doing more to stop and prevent the violation of the rights of women and the child. It also means making the most of new technologies in the service of fundamental rights and freedoms. The need to take responsibility and do more is also why Estonia looks forward to becoming a member of the Human Rights Council and to working proactively towards the fulfilment of its mandate.

Permit me to touch upon the developments in Syria. We have witnessed the complete breakdown of any semblance of the rule of law. We continue to see extensive human rights and international humanitarian law abuses. It appears that both sides have committed serious international crimes. Yet we still see no solution. We cannot look on and wait for the violence to spread even more widely. The Security Council — especially its permanent members — must overcome their differences and find a solution to the bloodshed. The least that all parties must do is to allow for humanitarian aid to be safely delivered and to guarantee the security of humanitarian workers. Without an end to the armed conflict, without peace, there can be no political process.

But it is not only Syria that needs our attention. We should not avoid the problem of protracted conflicts that have already waited for years to be solved. We shall speak with one voice against continuing violations of the territorial integrity of sovereign States and for the secure return of all forcefully displaced persons. Moreover, more attention to conflict prevention would help to avoid such violations in the future.

A stronger commitment to conflict prevention and to the enhancement of the rule of law can help to avoid violent conflicts and the most heinous international crimes. Under the principle of the responsibility to protect, States committed in 2005 to protect their people from ethnic cleansing, genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Today the content of the responsibility to protect is not debated. The difficulty, however, lies with its application: when Governments do not live up to their responsibility, the international community must react and act.

The international criminal justice system, especially the International Criminal Court, plays a crucial role in providing timely and decisive responses to such crimes. Investigations by the Court may deter further atrocities, prevent their escalation or accelerate their end. It is therefore essential to cooperate with the Court and apprehend those it has indicted.

As a result of the evolving nature of military conflicts, civilian casualties tragically are on the rise. Among civilians, women and children are the most vulnerable. When we take that into account, Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women, peace and security, takes on a whole new immediacy. Furthermore, conflict-related sexual violence requires more attention. Such violence can easily lead to further war crimes and crimes against humanity. Moreover, in advancing the rights of the child, the International Criminal Court's recent decision to convict Thomas Lubanga Dyilo was a significant achievement and will, we hope, have a strong deterrent effect in the future to prevent crimes against children.

The Crimean War, in the 1850s, brought the world the first extensive photographic reports of conflicts. Today, new media make it even more difficult to hide war crimes both on and off the battlefield. Modern technology brings home the reality and horror of war. We must therefore recognize the important role of technology in advancing human rights.

Freedom of expression is a human right, whether in the city square, the press or in cyberspace. For the third year in a row, Freedom House has ranked Estonia first in the world in Internet freedom. We have joined the coalition Freedom Online, a group of States working closely together to advance human rights online. In addition, Estonia looks forward to discussing actively matters relating to Internet freedom in the Human Rights Council, which adopted a resolution on that topic this year (resolution 20/8). The resolution was a genuine milestone affirming that fundamental rights in the virtual world must be protected with the same commitment as in the real world.

Internationally, there are worrisome developments related to Internet governance. Too many countries speak about the dangers of a free Internet from a security perspective. The truth is, as we know well, that cybersecurity is needed to prevent oppressive Governments and criminals from wreaking havoc. It is not to prevent peaceful individuals from speaking their minds or gathering information and exchanging ideas.

Despite having experienced extensive cyber attacks during the so-called Web War One, five years ago, Estonia does not support more rigid regulation and censorship in cyberspace. Estonia is committed to an open, secure and reliable Internet. It is therefore imperative to ensure that the International Telecommunication Union's new regulation does not lead to the restriction of Internet freedom and unnecessary limits to the free flow of ideas and information. In fighting cybercrimes, the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime provides the appropriate and primary legal framework at the global level.

Globally, there is a deficit of good and responsible governance. Its lack is the root cause of countless other ills. But again, some progress has been made. I was proud to represent Estonia when I signed on to the Open Government Partnership, along with representatives of 42 other countries. That multilateral initiative aims to take concrete steps to institute a new model of governance to maximize the potential of new technologies and, most important, to tackle corruption.

The information revolution we experience these days has assisted Estonia to successfully and rapidly transform itself into a rule-of-law-based democratic society. Estonia was the first country where people could cast their vote online in parliamentary and municipal elections. Just a few months ago we conducted our census for the first time to a large extent online. This year more than 90 per cent of taxpayers in Estonia filed annual income tax returns via the Internet. E-government, e-school, e-medical prescriptions and e-parking are examples of Estonian innovation in the field of citizen-friendly public services. They increase transparency and help to prevent and cut down corruption. They reduce costs. Most importantly, however, they have increased the possibility to exercise fundamental rights and freedoms and improve inclusive and responsible governance. Therefore, Estonia wishes to share its e-governance skills and to continue to facilitate exchanges with partners worldwide.

My comments on the need to do more apply to the United Nations too. Without reform, its global mission will be unsustainable. We need change, ranging from reforming the United Nations in the broadest sense to cutting the waste of paper. In an information age it is increasingly necessary to distinguish noise from signal, to distinguish genuine data from spin.

I have spoken thus far about what Governments can and must do. In our increasingly interconnected, wired and wireless world, civil society and the private sector play an ever-greater role. Governments benefit from involving non-governmental organizations, entrepreneurs and private individuals in governance. Estonia and many other countries increasingly and successfully do so. The challenge, however, is for the United Nations system — a multilateral organization based on modern, post-Westphalian States — to embrace those other actors and to involve them in finding solutions and decision-making.

Allow me to continue by sharing some thoughts related to development and responsibility.

Sustainable development is not a clichéd utopia; nor is it something forced on us from above. True development can be nothing other than sustainable. Yet we have seen unsustainability masked as development, despite the contradiction in terms.

Consider the global financial crisis. Burdening our children and grandchildren with mountains of debt is immoral, as is living at the expense of others. Growth without responsibility is illusory. We have learned that the hard way. Let us not make the same mistake again.

We are another year closer to the deadline we set ourselves for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Were they too ambitious? I do not think so. Aiming high is the least we can do. There is no point in setting targets that we can be confident of achieving effortlessly. Yet we must resist the temptation to sell everything as a success if that is not the case. Failure to achieve all the MDGs is no excuse not to set new targets. The world needs sustainable development goals. We are still in a preliminary phase of the discussion. Let us aim high and do our best.

Despite the world's best efforts, millions remain in poverty. The information technology (IT) transformation will create massive opportunities all over the world. We must, however, avoid a digital divide that would stymie this historic chance to accelerate development in all parts of the world. I was a member of Kofi Annan's high-level panel of experts on information and communication technology — already a decade ago — and I continue to be concerned about the gap between the digital haves and have-nots, especially because, by investing in IT, countries such as mine have leapt into modernity and transparency. New information and communications technologies have the potential to trigger the next industrial revolution, but governments cannot achieve it alone.

Entrepreneurs expanding the range of global knowledge networks are key partners in fighting poverty and creating a more transparent economy. They can also make an outsized difference in their communities and the world. However, Governments must provide a secure and fruitful environment for those sorts of ideas to emerge and prosper. Twenty-one years after restoring our independence, Estonia is an example where a combination of responsible free enterprise, e-governance, international partnerships and eco-friendly policies can put a country in the fast lane of development.

Experience shows that if we fail to act responsibly, we will, in the end, be forced to do so. Let us begin by acting responsibly.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Estonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mrs. Joyce Hilda Mtila Banda, President of the Republic of Malawi

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Malawi.

Mrs. Joyce Hilda Mtila Banda, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Joyce Hilda Mtila Banda, President of the Republic of Malawi, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Banda: Allow me to congratulate the President on his well-deserved election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. My delegation and I would like to assure him of Malawi's full support during his tenure of office.

It is an honour to address the Assembly today for the first time in my capacity as President of the Republic of Malawi. As the Assembly may be aware, I took office in April of this year after the death of my predecessor, His Excellency Professor Bingu Wa Mutharika. On behalf of all Malawians, I express our appreciation for the support that the world gave us during that difficult time in our country. I would like to also acknowledge in particular the support I received from leaders from the Southern African Development Community and the entire African continent when I assumed the presidency. The support that I received is a mark that Africa has indeed embraced women's leadership.

Joining the world's leaders here and becoming only the second female Head of State in Africa's history, after Her Excellency President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia, is a moment of pride for me. However, mine is not the story of the success of an individual, but of a people. A peaceful and constitutional transition of power was not inevitable when my presidency began. It is the courage and determination of the people of Malawi that made it possible. The people of Malawi have made a decisive choice. They have chosen democracy, they have chosen peace and they have chosen to work together to realize their destiny. It is my people's courage and determination that has taken me to the presidency, and which we will now apply to our national development.

The theme of the general debate this year is "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means". It allows us to reflect on some of the conflict situations around the world, including in Africa. Those conflicts have a devastating effect on the lives of millions, especially women and children. The impact of conflict goes beyond the people directly involved, affecting the region and the world. Let me agree with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon when he said in his reappointment speech that one of the greatest opportunities we have for a better world without conflict is through sustainable development.

The biggest threats to security and peace are poverty, lack of opportunity and lack of hope. It is unacceptable to me as the President of Malawi, as it should be to the global community, that we have children continuing to suffer from malnutrition, or that they yearn to learn but have to sit under trees rather than in proper classrooms. It is unacceptable that a mother should die while giving birth because the nearest health centre is far away, or that thousands die of diseases that we have answers for. It is unacceptable that the youth who represent the future of our world have few opportunities to realize their potential, or that they are not guaranteed a society where they can speak their mind. It is unacceptable that farmers and other workers continue to toil to make the best of what they have, but do not enjoy the fruits of their labour due to lack of modernization, a supportive policy environment and access to markets; and that they are buried under global tariffs and taxes. It is when those frustrations are in place that conflict takes root.

For decades, I have fought these issues in Malawi as a social justice and human rights activist and through my work at the gra-ssroots. I have experienced the struggles of the poor and the suffering of Malawian women. I have championed the advancement of the oppressed and marginalized, fought for the rights of women and children, campaigned for the betterment of the rural and urban poor. I can attest to the fact that the experience of a poor and disadvantaged Malawian is intimately intertwined with that of Africans, and indeed with that of the people of the least developed countries.

Now, as the President of the Republic of Malawi, I have a vision. My vision is to eradicate poverty through economic growth and wealth creation. Malawi aims to create wealth by transforming the structure of the economy, promoting the private sector in order to achieve economic growth, accelerating job creation and protecting the vulnerable and the excluded within a decentralized and democratic environment.

Specifically, my vision is to transform Malawi into one of the fastest-growing African economies in the next decade. For me, growth is not merely related to gross domestic product. Growth is about wealth and prosperity for all, opportunity for all, happiness for all, political and economic freedom for all. Growth is also about growing the number of children in school and young people in jobs. Growth is about increasing the number of mothers who give safe birth in a hospital and of growing the number of families who have plenty of food.

As the Assembly may be aware, for the past three years Malawi has faced severe economic and social challenges brought on by poor political and economic governance, which could have impacted our ability to accelerate the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Therefore, upon assuming office I immediately put in place an economic recovery programme to restore macroeconomic stability in the country so that we can not only address our immediate macroeconomic issues, but also secure Malawi's ability to meet the MDG targets.

I would like to share that we are certain that we will be able to achieve five of the eight MDGs by 2015. And we will continue to strive to achieve our goals of the three remaining MDGs: universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, and improving maternal health. Coincidentally, these three MDGs are related to issues that I have worked on throughout my life, and I will personally ensure that Malawi redoubles its efforts to make improvements in those areas.

My Government realizes that the potential of Malawi — the potential of our land, our resources and, most importantly, our people — is great. But that opportunity will be seized only through our own efforts. That is why my vision is not just hopeful words. Our willingness to take tough decisions does not end here. Our plans need to be translated into action. To that end, within my first 100 days in office, Malawi held an inclusive national dialogue on the economy to narrow down five priority sectors within our medium-term national development framework, the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II. The five priorities are energy, tourism, agriculture, mining and infrastructure development.

Central to those priorities is our emphasis on delivery through partnership with the private sector. We will facilitate that by making changes aimed at improving the business climate. My Cabinet has identified three specific projects within each priority sector and translated that into an implementation plan for the next two years. The projects range from the completion of essential roads and rail lines, to setting up alternative energy sources and undertaking business climate reform to attract investment into agro-processing and mining. The projects will set our country on a path of fulfilling its full potential.

In addition, I have also launched two initiatives — the Presidential Initiative on Maternal Health and Safe Motherhood, and the Presidential Initiative on Poverty and Hunger Reduction — to fast-track the interventions needed to address the social needs of disadvantaged groups, especially women and youth.

Malawi refuses to accept what others may consider to be our destiny — the status of underdevelopment. Malawi is committed to change that perception. But in so doing, my Government and, indeed, the people of

Malawi know that we need to engage the rest of the global community. That is why, within days of taking office, I reopened dialogue and engagement with our neighbours, with African leaders and with the rest of the world. The people of Malawi are grateful for the good will that many have shown us, and we are encouraged by the support of our partners.

Malawi will continue to need global support in the short and medium terms. We need this support to protect the rural poor from food shortages caused by prolonged dry spells in some parts of the country. Malawi is looking for partnerships to build its energy capacity. Malawi needs support to attract private investment for the rich potential we have in agro-processing and mining, among others. We are looking for partnerships to support the development of our transport and communications infrastructure in order to improve access to markets.

Before I conclude I wish to draw the Assembly's attention to the following three issues that have a bearing on most of the least developed countries. First, I call upon the General Assembly to ensure that the Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted in Turkey in May 2011, will be implemented in their entirety in an effective and timely manner. In particular, duty-free and quota-free market access and supply-side capacity must be ensured to the least developed countries.

Secondly, most least developed countries are facing the adverse effects of climate change, which is causing flooding, land degradation and drought. In that regard, Malawi welcomes the recent outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held in Brazil, where international consensus emerged and agreement was reached on important areas of sustainable development. The implementation of these agreements is very crucial for our future.

Finally, on the issue of the reform of the United Nations, Malawi fully supports the expansion of the Security Council in both permanent and non-permanent categories. As members of the Assembly are aware, Africa represents one of the single largest regions within the United Nations, and a very significant proportion of issues discussed in the Security Council concern the African continent. It is for those reasons, therefore, that Malawi joins the rest of the African nations in demanding at least two seats in the permanent category and five seats in the non-permanent category, as stipulated in the Ezulwini Consensus. Africa has to lead its own development, and that will be a step in ensuring that it can.

At this moment, I say to the Assembly that Malawi is on a journey – a journey to change its trajectory; a journey to make real change happen; a journey to foster private-sector growth; a journey to be an integral part of the global community. Malawi is ready to take its turn to grow, not just in wealth, but in opportunities, hopes and freedoms for all of the Malawian people. As a new President and a new member of the global community of leaders, I ask for the Assembly's support as this one African country journeys to realize its full potential — for its people, for Africa and for the world.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Malawi for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Joyce Hilda Mtila Banda, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.